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MARIANELA

A STORY OF SPANISH LOVE

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

OF

B. PEREZ GALDOS

BY

HELEN W. LESTER

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY
1892

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MARIANELA.

I.

LOST.

THE sun had set. After the short twilight came the tranquil and shadowy night, in whose bosom gradually died the last sounds of a drowsy world. The traveller pressed forward on his way, hastening his steps as the night advanced. He followed one of the narrow paths traced in the grass by the constant trampling of men and beasts. Unwearily he climbed a hill, on whose sides picturesque groups of *guinderos*, beeches, and oaks lifted their heads.

He was a man of middle age, of fresh complexion, of good height, broad of shoulder, resolute

of mien, with rugged features, and an acute and penetrating glance. He wore the dress adopted by wealthy men who travel in the summer, with the little round hat which owes to its ugliness the name of "mushroom." A field-glass hung from a leathern strap, and a stout cane was in his hand.

He paused, and, looking at the circle of the horizon, appeared impatient and disturbed. It was evident that he had little confidence in the correctness of his route, and that he was listening for the step of some villager who might direct him to his destination.

"I cannot be mistaken," he murmured; "they told me to cross the river by the stepping-stones. I did so. By this route, they said I should reach the mines of Socartes by keeping straight ahead."

After walking some distance, he added, "I am lost, — there is no doubt about it. This, Teodoro Golfin, is the result of your rashness. One should know when he is near a great mining establishment by the noise of machinery and the smoke of furnaces; but I can neither hear nor see anything. *Caramba!* Are there no men in this place? I seem to be in a desert. It is still half an hour

before the moon rises. If I could at least know where I am! But what does it matter?"

He ran a few rods, following, haphazard, one of the paths which branched off on all sides and crossed and twisted as if they wished still further to mislead and confuse him. But great as were his resolution and courage, he was forced at length to stop. The paths, which at first ascended, soon united and led downward, and finally descended until our traveller found himself on a declivity down which he could have gone only by rolling.

"Beautiful situation!" he exclaimed, smiling. "Beyond question I am in the mines, but no living soul, no smoking chimneys, no sound, not even a dog barking. What shall I do? Go back? What absurdity! Either I shall greatly change my nature, or else I shall reach Socartes to-night and embrace my beloved brother."

He stepped forward, and sank in the yielding soil.

"Halloo! This seems to be the crater of an extinct volcano. One needs to move cautiously over such a delightful precipice. Well, this stone

is a magnificent place to sit and smoke a cigarette while I wait for the moon to rise."

Golfin seated himself as tranquilly as he could have done on a bench in a park, and was preparing to smoke, when he heard a voice. Yes, it was undeniably a human voice.

"Come," said the traveller, joyfully, "that is a girl singing, and her voice is beautiful. If I 'm not mistaken the singer is moving." Raising his voice he called, "Halloo, my girl! Stop! Wait a minute!" At Golfin's cries, the song stopped completely. Undoubtedly, the mysterious being who had been entertaining his solitude with sad songs had been frightened by the man's brusque interruption, and had fled.

"This is a pleasant fix to be in!" said Golfin, lighting his cigarette. "However, there is nothing bad that lasts a hundred years. I 'll wait and smoke. Well, I have brought this about by wishing to come alone and on foot to the mines."

A slight breeze sprang up, and Teodoro thought he heard distant steps in the unknown, or supposed abyss, which lay before him. Listening attentively, he was soon sure that some one was

moving there. Rising, he called, "Girl, man, or whoever you may be, can one get from here to the mines of Socartes?"

He had scarcely finished when he heard the violent barking of a dog, and, following it, the voice of a man calling, —

"Choto! Choto! Come here!"

"Halloo!" called the traveller. "My good friend, whoever you are, convince your dog that I am a man of peace."

"Choto! Choto!"

A great, black dog, barking furiously, bounded toward Golfin, but ran back at his master's call. At that moment, Golfin saw a man's figure, immovable and expressionless as a block of stone, standing about ten rods from him in one of the paths.

"Halloo, my friend!" shouted Golfin, "can you tell me if these are the mines of Socartes?"

"Yes, señor, though we are a short distance from the buildings." The speaker's voice was youthful and agreeable. The doctor was much pleased to hear it, and even more gratified to notice that the moon had risen.

"Are you going to the works?" asked the mysterious youth, remaining immovable and rigid, without looking at the doctor, who was now near him.

"Yes, señor; but without doubt I have mistaken the road."

"This is not the entrance to the mines. That is by the steps at Rabagones, through which the direct road runs. From there, you would have reached the works in ten minutes; from here, it will take longer, because it is farther, and the road is very bad. You must go through all the mines, from this end to the other, where you will find the work-shops, the furnaces, the engines, the laboratory, and the offices."

"Well, I was mistaken, surely," said Golfin, smiling.

"I will guide you with much pleasure, for I know all these places perfectly."

Golfin, his feet sinking in the loose earth, slipping here and sliding there, at length reached the solid ground of the path, and his first act was to examine the youth. For a moment the doctor was overcome with surprise.

"You —" he murmured.

"I am blind, señor," added the young man; "still, without sight, I can go from one end of the mines to the other. This stick which I use keeps me from stumbling, and Choto accompanies me when Nela, who is my little guide, is not here. Now follow me, and you will soon reach your destination."

II.

GUIDED.

"HAVE you been blind from birth?" asked Golfin, with a lively interest which was not inspired solely by compassion.

"Yes, señor, from birth," replied the youth. "I know the world only by thought, by touch, and by hearing. I know that the most wonderful part of the world is that which is denied me; and the gift of sight seems to me so marvellous, that I cannot even comprehend the possibility of possessing it."

"*Quien sabe?*" said Teodoro. "But what is this which I see, my friend? What surprising spectacle have you here?"

The traveller, who had gone a few steps with his guide, stopped in astonishment at the fantastic

scene spread before his eyes. He found himself in a deep basin, like the crater of a volcano, with an irregular floor and even more irregular walls. On the sides and in the centre of this immense caldron towered colossal figures, — deformed men upside down, immense arms stretching themselves, distorted figures like those formed by the clouds; but quiet, immovable, enduring. Their color was that of mummies, an earth-color tending to red. It seemed the petrification of an orgy of gigantic demons, with their gestures and the ridiculous motions of their disproportioned heads fixed as the unalterable attitudes of sculpture. The silence filling the place was oppressive.

"Where are we, good friend?" said Golfin. "This is a nightmare."

"This part of the mine is called La Terrible," answered the youth, indifferent to his companion's amazement. "It was worked until two years ago, when the zinc in it was exhausted. The work is now carried on in other belts which are above here. You are surprised by the looks of the blocks of ore after the removal of the mineral.

They say this is a sublime sight, especially by moonlight. I know nothing of it."

"It is an astonishing sight," said the stranger, pausing to look at it; "but it is a source of fear rather than pleasure to me, because I associate it with the memory of my neuralgias."

"Choto! Choto! Here!" called the blind lad. "Be very careful now, as we are going to enter a gallery."

Golfin saw that the youth, touching the ground with his stick, directed himself toward a little door, whose frame was three thick beams. The dog entered first, smelling the dark cavity. The lad followed, with the boldness of one who lives in perpetual darkness. Teodoro went behind, not without experiencing a certain instinctive repugnance to this underground journey.

"It is wonderful," he said, "that you can go about here without stumbling."

"I have been brought up in these places, and know them as well as I know my own home. It is cold here. Put on your coat, if you have one with you. We shall not be long in making the passage."

He walked rapidly, feeling with his right hand along the wall formed of perpendicular beams. "Take care not to stumble in the ruts in the ground. Through here all the mineral from the vein above is hauled. Are you cold?"

"Tell me," said the doctor, banteringly, "are you sure that the earth has not swallowed us? Do you often walk through these delightful places, my boy?"

"I go through here often and at all hours, and I like it very much. Do you hear how the toad pipes? We are near the mouth now. There the little idler sits every night. I know him. He has a hoarse, slow voice."

"Who — the toad?"

"Yes, señor. We are near the end now."

"You are right; I can see the light of the opening like an eye looking at us."

When they emerged, the first sound which struck the doctor's ear was the melancholy song which he had heard before. The blind lad heard it also. He turned quickly, and, smiling with pleasure and pride, said, —

"Do you hear her?"

"I heard that voice before, and it pleased me beyond measure. Who is it singing?"

Instead of answering, the youth paused, and with all the power of his lungs shouted, "Nela! Nela!"

Sonorous echoes, some near, some far, repeated the name. The lad, putting his hands to his mouth, like a speaking-trumpet, called, —

"Do not come, for I am going there. Wait for me at the forge — at the forge."

Then turning to the doctor, he said, —

"Nela is a girl who accompanies me. She is my guide. At twilight we came back from the great meadow. It was a little cool, and as my father has forbidden me to go out at night without wrappings, I went into Romolinos' cabin. Nela ran to my house to find my overcoat. After I had been in the cabin awhile, I remembered that a friend was awaiting me at home. I had n't the patience to wait for Nela, so I set out with Choto. I was passing La Terrible when I met you. We shall soon reach the forge. There we will separate, because my father is vexed when I come home late, and Nela will accompany you to the offices."

"Thank you, my friend."

The tunnel had conducted them to a second space more singular than the previous one. It was a deep, open grotto, like those formed by an earthquake; but this had been opened, not by the fiery palpitations of the earth, but by the laborious pickaxe of the miner. It seemed the interior of a great wrecked vessel stretched upon the shore and broken in half by the waves. The illusion was complete when the sound of water was heard, like that of the gentle ripples when they play in the hollows of a rock, or lash the skeleton of a stranded ship.

"There must be water hereabouts," said Teodoro to his companion. "Is it some brook running near?"

"No, señor, here at the left is a hill. Behind it opens a great mouth, an abyss without any known bottom. It is called La Trascava. Some believe that it runs into the sea, near Ficóbriga. Others say that in the bottom of it runs a river, that turns and turns like a wheel, without ever coming out."

"And nobody has gone down into this chasm?"

"There is only one way to go down."

"What is that?"

"To throw oneself into it. Those who have entered it have never returned; and it is a pity, because they might have told us what is going on down there. By day you can see perfectly to climb among the rocks of the left side in order to reach its mouth. There is a comfortable seat there. Some people are afraid to approach it; but Nela and I often sit upon it and listen to the voice of the abyss. And, really, señor, it seems as though it spoke to us. Nela vows and declares that she hears words, that she distinguishes them clearly. To tell the truth, I have never heard words; but I have heard a murmur that is like a soliloquy, that at times seems sad, sometimes joyful, sometimes angry, sometimes jesting."

"And I have heard nothing but a sound of gurgling," said the doctor, laughing.

"That is the way it sounds from here. But we must not linger, because it is getting late. Prepare to enter another gallery."

"Another?"

"Yes, señor, and this is divided near the middle into two. Beyond that, there is a network of

turns, because they made galleries and afterwards abandoned them. Choto, go ahead!"

They soon reached the opening. Golfin, breathing deeply with pleasure, like one who has loosed a heavy load, exclaimed, as he looked at the sky, —

"Thank God, we can see the stars again!"

The blind youth turned his face upward and said with profound sadness, —

"Is it true that you exist, O stars?"

"God is very great and merciful," observed Golfin, placing his hand on his companion's shoulder. "*Quien sabe*, my friend? Very strange things have been seen, are seen every day."

As he said this, the doctor looked at him closely, trying to examine the lad's pupils by the faint light. Fixed and unseeing, the youth turned his face in the direction of the speaker's voice.

"I have no hope," he murmured.

They had come out into an open space. The moonlight, growing clearer each instant, illuminated undulating meadows and wide tablelands. At the left, the doctor saw a group of white houses on the brow of the hill.

"My home is here at the left," said the youth.

"Those three houses up there are all that are left of the village of Suso; all the others have been destroyed in different years in order to extend the mines. All below here is zinc. Our ancestors lived over thousands of millions of dollars without knowing it."

As he was saying this, there came running toward them a young girl, a maiden of the lightest feet and most diminutive stature.

"Nela! Nela!" called the lad. "Did you bring my overcoat?"

"Here it is," she replied, putting it over his shoulders.

"Was it you who sang? Do you know that you have a beautiful voice?" said Golfin.

"Oh," exclaimed the youth, "she sings admirably. Now, Mariquilla, you are going to accompany this gentleman to the offices, and I will go home. I hear my father's voice now; he is coming to look for me. He will surely scold me — Yes, I am coming, I am coming."

"Go home at once, my friend," said Golfin, pressing his hand. "The air is fresh, and may be dangerous for you. I thank you for your company.

I hope that we shall be good friends, for I shall be here for some time. I am the brother of Don Cárlos Golfin, the engineer of these mines."

"Ah, indeed! Don Cárlos is a great friend of my father's and of mine. He has expected you since yesterday."

"I reached Villamojada this afternoon. They told me there that Socartes was near, and that I could come afoot. As I like to see the country and am fond of exercise, I set out to walk, sending my baggage in a cart. You know how I lost my way; but there is no evil without some good. I have become acquainted with you, and I hope we shall be friends, — very good friends. Now, good-by; the cool air of September is not good for you. This Señorita Nela will kindly accompany me."

"From here to the offices is not more than a quarter of an hour by the road, — a mere trifle. Be careful in going down the inclined plane; the ground is slippery with dampness. *Adios*, señor."

He went up by an open stairway, while Golfin went forward, guided by Nela.

Does what they said merit a chapter to itself?

III.

AN EXPLANATORY DIALOGUE.

"WAIT, my child, do not go so fast," said Golfin, stopping. "Let me light a cigarette."

Having lighted the cigarette, he held the match near Nela's face, saying kindly, —

"I want to see you. Show me your face."

The girl looked at him with astonishment, and her black eyes shone with a sparkle for the brief instant during which the light of the match lasted. She was a maiden with the stature of a child. She seemed a child, save that her eyes had not the look of childhood. Somebody had said that she was a woman viewed through the small end of an opera glass; another, that she was a child with the eyes and expression of maturity. In spite of this non-conformity, she was admirably

proportioned, and her small head crowned her poor little body with a certain elegance.

"How old are you?" asked Golfin, throwing away the match, which began to burn him.

"They say I am sixteen years old," replied Nela, examining the doctor in her turn.

"Sixteen! You are very backward! Your body is but twelve at the most!"

"Ah! They say I am a phenomenon," she said sadly.

"A phenomenon," repeated Golfin, placing his hand on the little one's hair; "it may be. But come, let us go on."

Nela continued to walk resolutely without getting much in advance, — rather taking care to keep at the traveller's side, as if she appreciated to the fullest extent the honor of such noble company. She was barefooted; her light and agile feet showed constant familiarity with the ground and with the stones. She wore a short dress, and showed in its simplicity, as well as in her short, curly hair, a certain independence, more suggestive of a savage than of a mendicant. Her remarks surprised Golfin, giving evidence as they did of a thoughtful

character. Her voice had the accent of a courtesy which could not have been the result of her education, and her glances were fugitive and momentary when they were not directed at the earth or sky.

"Tell me," said Golfin, "do you live in the mines? Are you the daughter of an employé of this place?"

"They say I have neither father nor mother."

"*Pobrecita!* Do you work in the mines?"

"No, señor, I am entirely useless," she replied, without lifting her eyes from the ground.

"Well, by my faith, you are modest."

Teodoro bent to look at her face. It was very delicate, thin, and freckled. Her nose was well-shaped, and her eyes black and lustrous, though usually a light of sadness shone in them. Her dark-gold hair had lost its beautiful native color through negligence and constant exposure to the sun and dust. Her thin lips were always smiling, but her smile was like the almost imperceptible one on the face of the dead when they have died thinking of heaven. In fact, neither in speech, in looks, nor in manner did the poor child show the humiliated manner of the street-beggar.

Golfin touched her face caressingly with his hand.

"*Pobrecita!*" he exclaimed, "God has not been very generous toward you. With whom do you live?"

"With Señor Centeno, who is overseer of stock in the mines."

"You do not seem to have been born to abundance. Who were your parents?"

"They say my mother sold peppers in the market of Villamojada. She was not married. I was born one All-Saints' Day. After that my mother went to Madrid as wet nurse."

"What an admirable woman!" murmured Teodoro, ironically. "Perhaps you do not know who your father was?"

"Yes, señor," replied Nela, with a little air of pride, "my father was the first lamp-lighter in Villamojada."

"Wonderful!"

"I mean that when they put lamps in the streets for the first time," said the girl, giving to her account the gravity of history, "my father had charge of lighting and cleaning them. I was

cared for by my mother's sister, who was also unmarried, they say. My father had quarrelled with her. They say they were living together — all were living together — and when my father went to clean the lamps, he carried me in a basket along with the chimneys and the wicks and the oil. One day he went up to clean the lamp which is on the bridge there; he put the basket on the parapet, and I crept out of it and fell into the river."

"And you did not drown?"

"No, señor, because I fell upon the stones. *Madre de Dios!* They say I was very beautiful before that."

"Yes, undoubtedly you were very beautiful," affirmed the stranger, his soul filled with pity; "and you are still beautiful. But tell me another thing. How long have you lived in the mines?"

"They say it is thirteen years. My mother took me again after my fall. My father fell sick, and as my mother did not wish to help him, because he was wicked, he went to the hospital, where they say he died. Then my mother came

to work at the mines. One day the chief discharged her, because she had drunk so much brandy."

"And your mother went — Come, this woman interests me. She went — "

"She went to a great hole which is above here," said Nela, stopping in front of the doctor and giving to her voice the most pathetic tone, "and threw herself in."

"Zounds! A lamentable end, indeed! I suppose she never came out?"

"No, señor," answered Nela, "she is in there."

"After this catastrophe, poor child," said Golfin, kindly, "you remained here. Mining is hard work. You are dyed the color of the mineral; you are sickly and poorly-nourished. This life destroys the most robust natures."

"No, señor, I do not work. They say I am of no use, and never shall be."

"Stop there, you foolish child, you are a jewel."

"No, señor," Nela insisted energetically, "I cannot work. However small a load I try to carry, I fall to the ground. If I try to do any difficult thing, I faint."

"All that may be; still, if you should fall into the hands of people who should know how to take care of you, you could do good work."

"No, señor," repeated Nela, with as much emphasis as if she were eulogizing herself. "I am of no use; I am only a hindrance."

"So you are a vagabond?"

"No, señor, because I accompany Pablo."

"And who is Pablo?"

"The blind young man whom you met in La Terrible. I have been his guide since a year and a half ago. I take him everywhere."

"This Pablo seems a good youth."

Nela stopped again: and looking at the doctor with her face glowing with enthusiasm, exclaimed:

"He is the best in the world. My poor little master, blind as he is, has more talent than those who see."

"I like your friend. Does he live near?"

"Yes, señor, he is the only son of Don Francisco Penáguilas, a very good and rich man who lives in Aldeacorba."

"Why do they call you Nela? What does it mean?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. After a pause, she answered, —

"My mother called herself María Canela, but others called her Nela. They say it is the name of a dog. I call myself María. They call me María Nela and La Hija de la Canela. Some call me Marianela, others nothing but Nela."

"Does your master love you very much?"

"Yes, señor, he is very good. He says he sees with my eyes, because I take him everywhere and tell him how everything looks. He asks me what a star is, and I paint it for him, describing it so it is just the same as if he saw it himself. I explain everything to him, — what the plants are, the clouds, the sky, the lightning, the butterflies, the shells, and the faces of people and animals; I tell him what is ugly and what is beautiful, and so he enters into everything."

"I see that your work is not light. Do you give all your time to that? Do you know how to read?"

"No, señor, I am a useless thing," she said in a tone of utmost conviction; and the gesture accompanying her firm protest seemed to add, "You

are a fool to suppose that I am good for anything."

"Would it not please you to have your friend able to see?"

The girl did not answer at once. After a pause she said, —

"Ah, that is impossible!"

"Not impossible, although difficult."

"The chief engineer of the mines has given some hope to Pablo's father."

"Don Cárlos Golfin?"

"Yes, señor, Don Cárlos has a brother, a doctor, who, they say, makes the blind see, cures squinting eyes, and straightens crossed eyes."

"What an able man!"

"Yes, señor; and as this doctor has now sent word that he is coming here, his brother has written to him, telling him to bring his instruments to see if he can give sight to Pablo."

"And has this good man come yet?"

"No, señor; as he is always travelling through England and America, it seems that he will not be here for some time yet. But Pablo laughs at

this, and says this man will not give him what the Holy Virgin has denied him since his birth."

"Perhaps he is right. But tell me, are we not nearly there now? I can see a chimney that throws out a smoke blacker than the Inferno and a light that seems to be a forge."

"Yes, señor, we 'll soon be there. Those are the furnaces of the smelter, that burn day and night; here in front are the machines for washing the ore; at the right are the repair-shops; and there below are the offices."

The place appeared to Golfin's eyes as it had been described by Marianela. The smoke involved in a dark cloud all the buildings, whose dark masses showed themselves fantastically against the moon-lit background.

"It is more beautiful to look at once, than to live in," said Golfin.

After passing the furnace, the heat of which made them hasten their steps, the doctor saw another building as black and smoky as the rest. The moment he saw it, he heard the sound of a piano.

"I hear music. I know my sister-in-law's touch."

"It is Señora Sofia who is playing," said Nela.

Light from the cheerful rooms shone through the open windows, and in the balcony glowed a tiny spark. Before the doctor reached the house, the spark fell.

"There is the eternal smoker," called the doctor, in a tone of warmest affection. "Cárlos! Cárlos!"

"Teodoro!" answered a voice from the balcony.

The piano stopped like a singing bird that is frightened by a noise. Footsteps sounded in the house. The doctor gave a piece of silver to his guide, and hastened toward the door.

IV.

THE FAMILY OF STONE.

HURRYING along and jumping over the obstacles in her path, Nela went to the house which was behind the machine-shops and next to the stables, where the seventy mules of the establishment were slowly and gravely eating.

The abode of Señor Centeno was of modern construction, if not very elegant, or even comfortable. In its three small rooms lodged the Centenos, father and mother, the four children of the Centenos, the cat of the Centenos, and, in addition, Nela. In the interior, the dwelling seemed to prove clearly what Marianela had said, — namely, that she served for nothing but a hindrance. In fact, there was a place for almost everything, — for the Centenos; for the tools of

their sons; for the cat; for the plate from which the cat ate; for Tanasio's guitar; for the materials which he employed in making baskets; for half a dozen old mule-collars; for the blackbird's cage; for the two useless boilers; for an altar on which Señora Centeno placed her offering of cloth flowers and some secular candles colonized by the flies; for absolutely everything, in fact, except for the daughter of La Canela. She frequently heard, —

"I cannot take a step without stumbling over this troublesome Nela," or "Go to your corner. What a creature! You do nothing yourself, nor allow others to do anything."

The house consisted of three rooms and a garret. The first apartment was not only dining-room and parlor, but also the sleeping-room of the elder Centenos. In the second slept the two señoritas, Mariuca and Pepina, who were already of mature age. Tanasio, the first-born, occupied the garret, and Celipin, a lad of twelve, and the youngest of the family, had his bed in the kitchen, the innermost room, and also the darkest, smokiest, and most uninhabitable of the

three which composed the Centeno house. Nela, during the long years of her residence there, had occupied different corners, passing from one to another, as was necessitated by the accumulation of a thousand objects which served for naught but to rob a human being of the last piece of habitable floor. On one occasion, Tanasio, who, being as helpless as to legs as he was as to mental power, had, in consequence, been dedicated to basket-making, placed half a dozen of the examples of his industry in a heap in the kitchen. Then Nela sadly turned her eyes about without finding any place to lie down; but this difficulty suggested to her a sudden and happy thought, which she instantly put into execution. She slipped softly into a basket, and so passed the night in easy and tranquil sleep. That was undoubtedly a good and comfortable bed. When cold, she covered herself with another basket. After that, whenever there were baskets, she never lacked a case in which to shut herself. For that reason they said in the house, "She sleeps like a jewel."

During dinner, and amid the noise of an ani-

mated conversation upon the morrow's work, a voice would be heard to say brusquely, "Take it." Nela would take the porringer from the hands of any Centeno, large or small, and seat herself on a chest so as to eat undisturbed. Sometimes at the close of dinner, she would hear Señor Centeno's harsh voice say reproachfully to his wife, —

"Woman, you have given nothing to poor Nela."

Occasionally, the señora would move her head to look between her children, as if seeking some small and distant object, and at the same time would say, —

"Well, are you there? I thought that you had stayed in Aldeacorba again to-day."

At night, after supper they said the rosary. Staggering like priestesses of Bacchus, and rubbing their eyes with their fists, Mariuca and Pepina would then go to their beds, which were comfortable and commodious enough. Soon after would be heard a snoring duo of drowsy contraltos, which lasted uninterruptedly till day-break. Tanasio went up to the attic, and Celipin muffled himself up in ragged blankets not far from the baskets in

which Nela disappeared. The children thus disposed of, the parents remained sitting for a time in the main room. Centeno, stretching, seated himself by the little table, and taking a paper, made a thousand grimaces and wry faces which indicated the daring attempt to read it. The señora drew from the chest a stocking half-filled with gold, and after counting it and adding to or taking from it some pieces, carefully replaced it. She afterward drew forth various packages of paper containing gold, and changed some of the coins from one place to another. Then one might hear such phrases as: "I have taken thirty-two *reales* from Mariuca's; I have put back the six *reales* which I took from Tanasio; only eleven *duros* are lacking from the five hundred," or from the other side of the table came the droning reading, "Yesterday — a — meeting — took — place — "

The fingers of the señora counted, while those of Señor Centeno fearfully and waveringly followed the lines to guide him through the labyrinth of letters. Soon a yawn would be heard, then another; and at length, after the light was extinguished, by whose splendor the overseer of the mules had

enriched his store of knowledge, all would remain in placid silence.

One night, after all was hushed, a noise was heard from the baskets in the kitchen. As the shutter of the little window was never locked, there was a little light by which Celipin Centeno, who was yet awake, could see that the two highest baskets, placed one against another, were separated, opening like a mollusk-shell. Through the opening appeared Nela's small nose and black eyes.

"Celipin! Celipin!" she said, putting out her hand, "are you asleep?"

"No, I am awake. You look like a clam, Nela. What do you want?"

"Here, take this *peseta*. A gentleman, Don Cárlos's brother, gave it to me to-night. How much have you saved now? This is a present worth having. I've never given you more than a few *cuartos* before."

"Hand it here! Thank you, Nela," said the boy, reaching for the money. "One *cuarto* at a time, you have given me thirty-two *reales*. I have it here safe round my neck in the little bag you made me. You are a royal girl!"

"I do not want the money for anything. Take good care of it, for if the señora should find it, she would believe it was for mischief, and would beat you with the big cane."

"No, it is not for mischief, it is not for mischief!" said the boy, energetically, clutching the precious bag with one hand while the other supported his head. "It is to make me a useful man. On Sunday, if they let me go to Villamojada, I must buy a primer to learn to read, because they will never teach me here. Never mind. I will learn alone. Nela, I heard that Don Cárlos is the son of a man who swept the streets in Madrid. Alone, entirely alone, he learned all he knows, with God's help."

"Do you think you can do the same, you foolish child?"

"Since my parents never intend to take me out of these miserable mines I shall find another way. Yes, you shall see who Celipin is. I am not good for this kind of work, Nela. Wait till I get a good round sum together, and you shall see; you shall see how I shall go to the town. And there I will take either the train for Madrid or a steamer

which will take me to the islands far away; or I will go out to service, if they will only let me study."

"Dear me! How silent you keep all your schemes," said Nela, opening her case and putting out her head.

"You take me for a fool. Oh, Nelilla, I am wild. I cannot live this way. I shall die in the mines. I spend the nights crying, and I bite my hands and — Do not be afraid, Nela; do not think ill of me because of what I am going to tell you. I say it only to you."

"What is it?"

"I do not love my father and mother as I ought to love them."

"Well, if that is so, I shall not give you another *real.* Celipin, for my sake, think well of what you are saying."

"I can't help it. You see how we live here. We are not men, but animals. Sometimes I think we are of less account than the mules."

Sobs smothered the unhappy boy's voice. After a time he continued, —

"Any one who spends many years doing this

work becomes bad in the end, and his brains turn to mineral. No, I am not made for this. I tell my parents they should take me out of here and put me in a place where I can study, and they say they are poor, and that I have too many fancies. We are nothing more than beasts that earn a day's wages. But why don't you say something to me?"

Nela did not reply at once. Perhaps she was comparing her companion's lot with her own, finding hers infinitely harder.

"What do you wish me to say?" she answered at length. "As I can never be anything, as I am nobody, I cannot say anything to you. But do not think those bad things; do not think that of your parents."

"You say that to quiet me, but you can see very well that I am right. Nela, I believe you are crying."

"Not I."

"Yes, you are crying."

"Every one has his own little troubles to cry over," said María, in a choking voice. "But it is getting very late, Celipin, and we must go to sleep."

"Not yet! Pshaw!"

"Yes, my boy, go to sleep and do not think of those bad things. Good-night."

The shells closed, and all was still.

The Señora and the Señor Centeno, who, after a thousand trials, had at last found a way of making a living in the mines of Socartes, got together, with the aid of their four children, a day's wages that would have seemed to them a princely income in the days in which they used to walk from fair to fair, selling *pucheros*.

Concerning the intellectual faculties of Señor Centeno, it should be said that in the opinion of many his head rivalled in density the great automatic hammer mounted in the workshops. Not so the señora, who seemed a woman of much prudence and good judgment, and of wonderful ability in governing all the household. She hoarded the wages of her husband and her sons, which amounted to a handsome sum, and each time that she collected the money it seemed to her that the Christ himself had crossed her threshold. Such was the pleasure that the sight of money gave her.

The señora gave her children very few comforts in exchange for the fortune which was being earned by their hands; but as they did not complain of the degrading poverty in which they lived, as they never showed any desire for emancipation, nor longing for a life more worthy of human beings, the señora let the days go by. Many passed before her daughters slept in beds; many more before their robust bodies were covered with decent clothing. She fed them frugally and methodically, but the dinner in her house was but a dreary business.

In regard to intellectual food the señora firmly believed that with the erudition which her spouse had acquired in his laborious reading, the family had sufficient to merit the dictum of most learned; so that she did not stimulate the spirit of her sons with the teachings of the schools. Although the older children assisted her, yet she did not leave the youngest free to study, but, during twelve hours of the day, saw him engulfed in the imbruting work of the mines; so that the entire family sailed wide and free on the high seas of stupidity.

The two young women, Mariuca and Pepina,

did not lack charms, the principal being their youth and robustness. One knew how to read, the other did not. They were erect, broad-shouldered, and as strong as Amazons. They wore short skirts, showing the calf of their robust legs and the fleshy, bare feet. Their rude heads would have been admirable sustaining an architrave, like caryatides. The red dust of the ore had stained them from head to foot, like the other workers in the mines, giving them the appearance of colossal figures of crude terra cotta.

Tanasio was an apathetic man. His lack of character and ambition amounted to idiocy. Shut in the house since his infancy, ignorant of all deceit, of all vexation, of all pleasure, of all pain, this youth, who was predestined to be a machine, had become absolutely a tool. On that day in which such a being could have an idea of his own, the whole order of things by which stone cannot think would be reversed.

The relations of this progeny with their mother, who was the undisputed ruler of all the family, were those of an absolute docility on the part of the children, and a domineering sovereignty on

the part of the señora. The only one who was accustomed to show signs of rebellion was the youngest. The señora with her limited views could not comprehend his insane aspiration to be something besides a stone. The señora loved her children; but there are many ways of loving. She always told them that, above all things, they should be willing to work perpetually in the mines, to amass in one heap all their wages, to obey her blindly, and not to have mad ambitions, nor anxiety to shine in fine clothing; nor should they desire to be married too soon, or to learn evil ways, or to meddle with learning. "Because," she said, "the poor must always be poor, and as such should deport themselves, and not chatter like the rich and the people of the city, who are all consumed by vices and corrupted by sins."

The treatment which the children in the Centeno household received has been described that you may understand what was accorded Nela, an abandoned child, alone, useless, incapable of earning money, without future, without ancestry, without hope, without personality, without right to anything beyond a mere subsistence. The

señora gave her that, firmly believing that her generosity amounted to heroism. She repeatedly said to herself when filling Nela's porringer, "What a good place I am gaining for myself in Heaven!" And she believed it as she believed her religion. Into her ignorant head did not and could not enter any other view of the holy exercise of charity. She did not comprehend that an affectionate word, a caress, a delicate and loving treatment which should make the dwarfed forget her smallness, the miserable one her miseries, are charities of greater value than an abundance of soup to the hungry. Did she not give that much to the cat? And the cat, at least, heard the most tender tones. Never had Nela heard herself called "*michita*" or "*monita;*" never had they said to her "*re-preciosa,*" — melodious and endearing terms which were often addressed to the cat.

Never had Nela been told that she was born of a human creature, like the other inhabitants of the house. She was never punished; but she knew that this exemption was founded on the sad disdain which her wretched physical constitution inspired, and by no means on regard for her. Never

had she been told that she had a soul ready to give rich fruits if it were cultivated with care. Never had she been told that she carried within herself the germ of delicate and noble sentiments, and that these tiny buds might become beautiful and luxuriant flowers without more cultivation than a kindly glance now and then. Never had she been told that she had a right, through Nature's rigor at her birth, to certain attentions from which the robust, the strong, those who have parents and a home of their own, may be exempt, but which belong, through Christian charity, to the invalid, the poor, the orphan, the disinherited.

On the contrary, all treated her as if she were a mere pebble which has not even a form of its own save that given it by the waters which carry it along. All allowed her to see that her place within the house was inferior to that of the cat, whose head received the tenderest caresses, and to that of the blackbird hopping in its cage. To the least of these it was never said: "*Pobrecita!* it would have been better if you had died!"

V.

WORK. — LANDSCAPE. — FIGURES.

THE smoke of the furnaces, which continued their hoarse breathing throughout the night, at last became slightly silvered in its highest spirals. The smiling morn appeared over the distant country and behind the mountains. Little by little emerged successively from the shadow the peaks which surrounded Socartes, the immense stretches of reddish earth, and the black buildings. The bell of the establishment called with harsh voice, "To work," and hundreds of drowsy men came forth from their houses, cabins, hovels, and huts. The hinges of the doors grated. From the stables slowly came the mules, wandering alone to the watering-trough; and the establishment, which a little earlier had seemed a funereal mansion illuminated by the infernal light of the furnaces, now

became animated, began to move its thousands of hands.

Nela also came forth from her house. She carried in her hand a piece of dry bread which the señora had given her for her breakfast: and as she ate, she walked rapidly, looking grave and thoughtful. She soon passed the buildings, and after going up the inclined plane, ascended the open staircase until she reached the houses of the suburb of Aldeacorba. The first building was an elegant dwelling, large, solid, cheerful, with a stone coping, gables, and a wide shield surrounded by granite foliage.

A small *patio*, surrounded by mud-walls, gave access to the house, at the right of which was a beautiful orchard. When Nela entered, the cows, which were going to the meadow, were coming out. After exchanging some words with the cowherd, she approached a stout, mustachioed, gray-haired man, with a sympathetic face and an affable manner, and whose bearing resembled somewhat both the soldier and the farmer. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and his shaggy, robust arms were exposed to the elbow. Before the girl

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could speak, he turned, and addressing some one within, said, "My son, here is Nela."

Immediately there appeared on the threshold a youth of noble mien and statuesque proportions, — grave, erect, with head immovable and eyes fixed in their orbits. His face seemed like exquisitely sculptured marble. He lacked, however, the gift which is the nucleus of human expression. That face of a blind Antinoüs had the cold serenity of marble converted by genius and the chisel into a statue, and by vital force, into a personality. He seemed about twenty. His admirably proportioned body was in every way worthy of the beautiful head which it sustained.

Don Francisco Penáguilas, the young man's father, was more than good; he was wise, kind, affable, honorable, magnanimous, and well-educated. Nobody ever disliked him. He was the most respected of all the rich farmers of the country, and more than one dispute had been settled by the wise mediation of the Señor of Aldeacorba. In his youth he had gone to America, and on returning to Spain without fortune, had served in the civil guards. Retiring to his

native country, where he applied himself to work and gain, he inherited a well-stocked *hacienda*, and at the time of our story, had just inherited another.

His wife, who was an Andalusian, had died very young, leaving an only son, who had been deprived from his birth of the most precious of the senses. This was the keenest trial that embittered the good father's life. What did it matter that he had riches, and saw that fortune favored his interests and smiled on his house? For whom was it all? For one who could see neither the sleek cows, nor the smiling meadows, nor the overflowing granaries, nor the orchards full of fruit. Don Francisco would have given his eyes to his son, were that species of generosity practicable in the world which we know; but as it is not, Don Francisco could not put into execution the noble impulses of his heart, save by furnishing the unfortunate youth with everything possible to make less unendurable the darkness in which he was living. For him were all the care and the infinite caresses and delicate attentions whose secret belongs to mothers, and sometimes to fathers, when there are no mothers. Never had he re-

fused his son any right and just thing that might console and entertain him. He amused him with stories and readings, treated him with solicitous care, attending to his health, to his legitimate pleasures, to his instruction and his Christian education, — "Because," said the Señor of Penáguilas, "I do not wish my son to be doubly blind."

Seeing his son go out, accompanied by Nela, he said kindly to them, —

"Do not go far to-day. Do not run. *Adios.*"

He watched them from the gate, till they turned at the corner of the orchard-wall. Then he entered the house; for he had many things to do, — to write a note to his brother Manuel, to order a cow, to prune a tree, and to see if they had set the speckled hen.

VI.

NONSENSE.

PABLO and Marianela went to the fields, preceded by Choto, who ran to and fro, wagging his tail and jumping, and dividing his caresses equally between his master and the little guide.

"Nela," said Pablo, "this is a beautiful day. The air is fresh and sweet, and the sun is warm, but not unpleasant. Where shall we go?"

"Let us go through these meadows ahead of us," replied Nela, putting her hand into one of the pockets of the youth's coat. "I want to see what you have brought me to-day."

"Look carefully, and you will find something," said Pablo, smiling.

"Ah, me! chocolate! And don't I like chocolate! Nuts! Something wrapped in paper!

What is it? Candy? Indeed, I do like candy. How sweet it is! No rich food is ever seen at our house, Pablo. We do not waste much in good eating. The truth is, we do not waste much on clothes either. In fact, we do not waste money on anything."

"Where shall we go to-day?" repeated the blind lad.

"Where you wish, sweetheart," replied Nela, eating the candy and throwing away the paper. "Command me, king of the world."

Nela's black eyes shone with happiness, and the expression of her little bird-like face was constantly varying. Looking at her, one might think he saw a twinkling of trembling reflections, like those which light produces on the surface of agitated water. That weak creature, in whose insignificant body the soul seemed restricted and restrained, expanded and developed marvellously when she found herself alone with her master and friend. When with him, she had spontaneity, shrewdness, sensibility, grace, genius, fancy. When she left him, she seemed to lock upon herself the dark doors of a prison.

"Then, I say that we will go where you wish," said Pablo. "I like to obey you. If it pleases you, we will go to the grove that is nearest to Saldeoro, — that is, if you like that plan."

"Good! good! That is where we will go," cried Nela, clapping her hands; "but as there is no hurry, we will sit down when we are tired."

"And that is a very pleasant seat where the fountain is, don't you remember, Nela, where there are such large trunks that seem placed there as seats for us, and where we can hear, oh, so many birds that it is glorious?"

"We will walk past the mill which you told me of, — the one that makes a noise like a drunken man's confused talk. Oh, what a beautiful day, and how happy I am!"

"Does the sun shine much, Nela? Though you tell me it does, I do not understand, because I do not know what it is to shine."

"Yes, it shines brightly, *señorito mio*. And what does it matter to you? The sun is very ugly. Nobody can look at its face."

"Why not?"

"Because it hurts."

"Hurts what?"

"The sight. What do you feel when you are happy?"

"When I am free, with you, only we two alone in the meadows?"

"Yes."

"Well, I feel born within my breast a freshness, a sweet delicacy."

"That 's it. You know how the sun shines."

"With freshness?"

"No, stupid."

"With what, then?"

"With *that*."

"And what is *that?*"

"*That*," reaffirmed Nela, with an accent of the firmest conviction.

"Now I see that these things cannot be explained. I used to form the idea of day and night to myself. How? I 'll tell you. It was day when people spoke; it was night when they were silent and the cocks crowed. Now, I do not make the same comparisons. It is day when we are together, you and I; it is night when we are separated."

"Ah!" said Nela, throwing back the locks that fell upon her forehead, "to me, who have eyes, it seems the same."

"I am going to ask my father to let you live in my house, so that you may not be separated from me."

"Good! good!" said Nela, clapping her hands again.

She went ahead, springing along for several steps, and lifting her skirts with extreme grace, began to dance.

"What are you doing, Nela?"

"Ah, I am dancing. I am so happy that I want to dance."

But it was necessary to make a little leap over an obstacle in the path, and Nela gave her hand to Pablo. They went through a lane hedged in by thorn-trees hung with ivy. Nela parted the branches that they might not prick her master's face. Then they climbed a hill covered by leafy chestnuts and walnuts. When they reached the top, Pablo said, —

"If it is not unpleasant for you, let us sit down here. I hear footsteps."

"They are the farmers returning from the market at Homedes. This is Wednesday. The highway is in front of us. Let us rest here before we enter the public road,"

"It is the best thing we can do. Choto, come here."

The three seated themselves.

"This place is full of blossoms. Oh, how lovely!"

"Pick me a branch. Although I cannot see them, I like to have them in my hand. I fancy that I hear them."

"That is strange."

"It seems to me that when holding them in my hand, they make me understand — I cannot tell you how — that they are beautiful. There is something within me — I cannot tell you what — that responds to them. Ah, Nela, I fancy that within myself I see something."

"Oh, yes, I understand it; how we have it all within us, — the sun, the plants, the moon, the great blue sky always full of stars, — all, all that we have within us. I mean that besides the divine things outside, we carry others within us.

Here is a flower for you, and another and another, — six. All are different. Do you not know what the flowers are?"

"Well," said the lad, somewhat confused, putting them up to his face, "the flowers are — some are like the little smiles of the earth. The truth is, I do not know much about the vegetable kingdom."

"Dear me! How little you know!" exclaimed Nela, caressing her friend's hand. "The flowers are the stars of the earth."

"What an absurdity! And what are the stars?"

"The stars are the glances of those who have gone to heaven."

"Then the flowers — "

"They are the glances of those who have died and have not yet gone to heaven," affirmed Nela, with the conviction and *aplomb* of a philosopher. "The dead are buried in the earth. As they cannot stay there without taking a little peep at the world, they throw out from themselves something which comes up in the form of a flower. When there are many flowers in a meadow, it is be-

cause in times gone by many dead were buried there."

"No! No!" replied Pablo, seriously. "Do not believe such foolish things. Our religion teaches us that the spirit is separated from the body, and that the mortal life is ended. That which is buried, Nela, is no more than a shell, — useless clay, that cannot think nor feel nor see."

"The books may say that, but the señora says the books are full of lies."

"Faith and reason say it, dear Nela. Your imagination has led you to believe a thousand mistaken things. Little by little I shall keep correcting them, and you shall have right ideas about the things of this world and the other."

"Oh, yes, you had better try to teach me, — you, who have tried to make me believe that the sun stands still and the earth moves around it! How can any one know what he cannot see? I hope I may die this minute if the earth is not as firm as a mountain, and the sun moving around it! *Señorito mio*, I have spent many hours of the night and of the day looking at the sky, and I

know how all this machinery is managed. The earth is below, full of large and small islands. The sun goes over one and is hidden by another. It is God's palace."

"What nonsense!"

"And why is n't it so? You have not seen the sun on a clear day. Why, Pablo, it seems to rain blessings. I do not believe there could be any wicked ones, no, there would not be, if they should turn their faces up and see that great eye which is watching us."

"Your religion is full of superstitions, dear Nela. I shall teach you better ideas."

"I have been taught nothing," said Nela, simply; "but by thinking and thinking — laugh if you choose — I have drawn out from my brain many things that comfort me and so, when a good idea comes to me, I say, 'This ought to be so, and not otherwise.' At night, when I am alone in the house, I keep thinking of what will become of us when we die, and of how much the Holy Virgin loves us."

"Our loving mother!"

"I look at the sky and I feel her above me, just

as when we are near a person we feel the warmth of his breath. She looks at us by night and by day, by means of — do not laugh — by means of all the beautiful things there are in the world."

"And those beautiful things — "

"Are her eyes, you stupid fellow. You would understand it perfectly, if you had your own. A person who has not seen a white cloud, a tree, a flower, running water, a child, the dew, a little lamb, the moon passing so grandly through the sky, and the stars, which are the glances of those who have died — "

"They could not very well go up there, if they remained below, turning into flowers."

"How wise you are getting! They stay below while they are washing away their sins, and afterward they fly up. The Virgin awaits them. Yes, believe it. What could they be but the souls of those who are already saved? And don't you know that the stars fall? Well, then, I myself have seen them fall so, so, making a streak of light. Yes, señor, the stars come down when they have something to tell us."

"Ah, Nela," exclaimed Pablo, "foolish as your

remarks are, they charm me, because they show the purity of your soul and the force of your imagination. All these mistakes show a great desire to know the truth, and a strong mind which would be wonderful if it were aided by reason and education. It is necessary that you should acquire a precious gift of which I am deprived. You must learn to read."

"To read? Who will teach me?"

"My father. I will ask him to teach you. You know he denies me nothing. What a great pity that you should live as you do! Your soul is full of precious treasures. I know it well. I do not see without, but I see within, and all the wonders of your soul have been revealed to me since you have been my guide. A year and a half ago! It seems only yesterday that we began our walks. No, it is a thousand years since I first knew you. Why is there such a strong sympathy between your feelings and mine? You have just said a thousand foolish things, and I, who know something of the truth about the world and religion, have felt myself moved and warmed as I have listened. I fancy that you are speaking within my heart."

"I wonder if that has something to do with what I feel?"

"What is it?"

"That I am in the world to be your guide, and that my eyes will be useless unless they are of use in guiding you and telling you what the beautiful things of the earth are."

The blind lad turned suddenly, and extending his hands to touch his friend's little body exclaimed eagerly, —

"Tell me, Nela, what you are like."

Nela said nothing. She had received a stab.

VII.

MORE NONSENSE.

AS they were rested, they now walked on till they reached the entrance of the grove nearest Saldeoro. They stopped under a group of old walnuts, whose trunks and roots formed a series of mounds with mossy hollows, so adapted for seats that art could have done no better. From the depth of the wood ran a tiny rill of water, leaping from stone to stone till it reached a dam, which served as a reservoir for feeding the brook, from which the people living near were supplied with water. In front the ground gradually sloped, offering a grand panorama of green hills dotted with groves and hamlets, and of level meadows, where hundreds of cattle were tranquilly grazing. In the distance two proud hills, which seemed the limit of the earth, allowed one

to see the pure blue of the sea in a great segment.

Pablo seated himself on the trunk of a walnut, and reached up to catch the branches, through whose leaves flickered an occasional ray of sun.

"What are you doing, Nela?" he said after a pause, not hearing the step, nor the voice, nor the breathing of his companion. "What are you doing? Where are you?"

"Here," replied Nela, touching him on the shoulder. "I am looking at the sea."

"Is it very far?"

"It can be seen between the hills of Ficóbriga."

"It is grand, — so grand that you can look at it all day and yet wish to look longer. Is n't it so?"

"I can see only a piece like a bite taken out of a piece of bread."

"I understand it now. All say there is no beauty equal to that of the sea because of its simplicity. Nela, listen to what I am going to tell you. But what are you doing?"

Nela, grasping a branch of the walnut with both hands, was gracefully swinging.

"Here I am, *señorito mio*. I am wondering why God does not give us wings to fly with, like birds. What could be more beautiful than to mount and in one flight to reach that peak that is between Ficóbriga and the sea?"

"If God has not given us wings, still he has given us thought, which flies farther than the birds, because it reaches even to God himself. Of what use would wings be if God had not given you the power to think?"

"Well, I should like both gifts. If I had wings I would catch you in my little beak and carry you through these worlds and up to the highest of the clouds."

Pablo stretched out his hand to touch Nela's head.

"Sit near me," he said. "Are you not tired?"

"A little," she answered, seating herself, and leaning her head with childlike confidence on her master's shoulder.

"You breathe hard, Nela. You are very tired. It is from so much flying. Well then, what I was going to say to you is this: speaking of the sea made me remember something which my father

read last night. You know that ever since I have been old enough to understand, my father has been accustomed to read to me every night different books of science, history, art, and fiction. These readings and my walks with you, one might say, are all my life. Well, last night my father read some chapters on beauty. The author said it was the glow of kindness and of truth, with many other interesting ideas, and all so well expressed that it was a pleasure to hear it."

"That book," said Nela, wishing to show her knowledge, "is not like the one Padre Centeno has, called 'The Thousand'—I know not how many—'Nights.'"

"No, it is not that, you foolish child. It speaks of beauty in the abstract. You understand something of ideal beauty because you must know that there is a beauty that is not seen, nor touched, nor perceived with any of the senses."

"Like the Virgin Mary, for example," interrupted Nela, "whom we neither see nor touch, because the images are not herself, but her portrait."

"You are right. That is so. While we were speaking of form my father closed the book and said, 'Unhappily you cannot comprehend it.' I insisted that I could. I said that there was but one beauty, and that pervaded everything."

Nela, inattentive to such subtleties, had taken the flowers from her friend's hand and was twisting them into a wreath.

"I had an idea about this," added Pablo, energetically, — "an idea of which I have been possessed for many months. I still insist that I do not need eyes for this. I said to my father, 'I conceive a type of enchanting beauty, a type which contains all possible beauties. That type is Nela.' My father began to laugh, and said 'Yes.'"

Nela colored like a poppy, and knew not what to answer. During a brief instant of terror and anxiety she believed that the youth was *looking* at her.

"Yes, yours is the most perfect beauty that can be imagined," added Pablo, warmly. "How could it be otherwise than that your kindness, innocence, candor, grace, imagination, your pure and affectionate soul, which has been capable of cheering my

saddest days, should be represented in that same beauty? Nela, Nela," he added eagerly, "is it not true that you are very lovely?"

Nela was silent. Instinctively she had covered her face with her hands, tangling in her hair the half-wilted flowers which she had picked in the meadow.

"Why do you not answer? It is true you are modest. If you were not, you would not be so dear as you are. Why do you not speak?"

"I do not know," murmured Nela timidly, without moving her hands. "They say that when I was a child, I was very beautiful. Now — "

"And now also."

Nela, in her great confusion, could only say, —

"Now — you know people say many foolish things; they are often mistaken also. Sometimes those who have eyes see the least."

"Oh, how well said! Come here and give me a kiss."

Nela did not go to him at once, because, having the garland still upon her hair, she wished to observe the effect of that finery in the clear crystal

of the water. For the first time in her life she felt vain. Leaning on her hands, she looked into the pool.

"What are you doing, Mariquilla?"

"I am looking into the water, which is like a mirror," she replied.

"You do not need to look at yourself. You are as beautiful as the angels."

"The water is trembling," said Nela, "and I cannot see myself well, *señorito*. It trembles as I do. Now it is stiller. Now it does not move. I am looking at myself now."

"How lovely you are! Come here, my little one," said Pablo, extending his arms.

"I, lovely?" she said, full of confusion and anxiety. "Well, what I saw in the pond is not so ugly as they say. It must be that many do not know how to see."

"Yes, there are many."

"If I could only dress myself as others are dressed," exclaimed Nela, proudly.

"You shall be so dressed."

"And this book says I am beautiful?" asked Nela, trying to convince herself.

"I say it, — I, who am always truthful," replied the youth.

"It may be," said Nela, leaving her mirror, thoughtful and not quite satisfied, "that men do not comprehend things as they are."

"Humanity is subject to a thousand errors."

"I believe it is so," said Nela, receiving great consolation from her friend's words. "But why should they laugh at me?"

"The gift of sight can cause great mistakes. It keeps men from knowing the absolute truth, — and absolute truth says that you are beautiful, without any touch or shadow of ugliness. Let them tell me the contrary, and I will undeceive them. No! The form cannot be the mask of Satan placed before the face of God. Ah, into how many mistakes sight leads men! Nela, Nela, come here. I want to have you near me and to caress your beautiful head."

Nela ran to throw herself into Pablo's arms.

"Pretty one!" he exclaimed, straining her to his breast. "I love you with all my heart."

Nela said nothing. Her soul was full of chaste

tenderness. The youth, trembling and perturbed, held her closely, saying in her ear,—

"Angel of God, love me or I shall die."

Nela loosed herself from Pablo's arms and fell into profound meditation. An irresistible force impelled this phenomenal child-woman to look at herself in the mirror of the water. She moved softly to the pool, and gazing in its green depths, saw her image, — the large black eyes, the freckled skin, the small nose, peaked but well-shaped, the thin hair, and the mobile, bird-like face. She leaned farther over the water, which reflected, all too faithfully, her undeveloped bosom. The flowers which she had in her hair fell into the water, making the surface tremble and destroying the image. The daughter of La Canela felt as if her heart were being torn from her breast, and she fell back, murmuring,—

"Holy Mary! How ugly I am!"

"What did you say, Nela? I thought I heard your voice."

"I said nothing. I was thinking — yes, thinking it is time to go back to your house. It will soon be dinner-time."

"Yes, let us go. You will eat dinner with me, and this afternoon we will go out again. I do not wish you to leave me."

When they reached the house, Don Francisco Penáguilas was in the *patio*, and two gentlemen were with him. Nela recognized the engineer of the mines and the gentleman who had been lost in La Terrible the previous night.

"Here are the engineer and his brother, the gentleman who came last night," she said.

The three men looked with visible interest at the blind lad, who was approaching.

"We have been awaiting you for some time," said the father, taking his son by the hand and presenting him to the doctor.

"Let us go in," said the engineer.

"Blessed be the wise and charitable!" exclaimed the father, looking at Teodoro. "Enter, señores. Blessed be the moment when you first enter my house!"

"Let us examine this case," murmured Golfin.

When Pablo and the two brothers entered, Don Francisco turned toward Mariquilla, who had remained immovable and astonished in the middle of the *patio*, and said kindly,—

"Nela, it is better t
cannot go out again th

And presently, as
gone, he added, "Yo
Dorotea will give you

CONTINUES.

On the following day, Pablo and his guide set out again for a walk. As the sky was clouded and there was a breeze that threatened to become a strong wind, they decided that their walk should not be long. Crossing the common of Aldeacorba, they followed the tableland through Poniente, meaning to descend to the excavations.

"Nela, I have something to tell you that will make you leap for joy," said the youth, when they were at some distance from the house. "You saw those gentlemen who were awaiting me yesterday?"

"Yes, Don Cárlos and his brother, whom we met last night."

"He is a famous doctor who has travelled all through America, making wonderful cures. He

has come to visit his brother. As Don Cárlos is a very good friend of my father, he asked him to examine my eyes. How kind and good he is! First, he talked with me; he asked me several questions and told me droll and interesting stories. Then he told me to be quiet. I felt his fingers on my eyebrows. After a long time, he said some words I did not understand, — they were medical terms. Then they took me to a window. There was silence in the room while he looked at me with some instrument, I do not know what. Then the doctor said to my father, 'We will make the attempt.' They said other things in a low voice, so that I could not hear them, and, really, I think they spoke by signs also. When they had gone, my father said to me, 'My son, I cannot hide from you the joy in my heart. That man, that angel of God, has given me hope, — very little hope, but hope seems to grasp at the greatest when it is the smallest.' By his voice I knew that he was weeping. What are you doing, Nela? Are you dancing?"

"No, I am here at your side."

"Why, at other times when I have told you

good news, you have begun to dance. But where are we going to-day?"

"It is an unpleasant day. Let us go toward La Trascava, which is a sheltered place, and then we will go to La Terrible."

"Well, as you wish. Ah, Nela, my friend, if it should be true, if God should wish to have pity on me and grant me the pleasure of seeing you, — although my sight should last but a day, although I should become blind the following day, how much I should appreciate it!"

Nela said nothing. After showing the greatest joy, she remained thoughtful, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"Many strange things are seen in this world," added Pablo, "and God's pity bursts out at times, just as at other times his anger shows itself. It comes unexpectedly, after long tortures and punishments, just as his wrath appears, following happiness that seems safe and eternal. Does n't it seem so?"

"Yes, what you hope for will happen," said Nela.

"How do you know it?"

"My heart tells me."

"Your heart tells you? And why should not that knowledge be certain?" said Pablo. "Yes, the chosen souls can, in certain cases, foretell the future. I have noticed it in myself, — my spirit whispers incomprehensible things to me. After any event has occurred, I have said with astonishment, 'I knew something of this.'"

"It is the same with me," answered Nela. "Yesterday you said you loved me dearly. When I went home, I kept saying to myself, 'It is a strange thing, but still I dreamed something of it.'"

"It is wonderful, my little one, how in accord are our souls! United by feeling, there is nothing lacking to them but the legal bond. That bond they shall have, if I acquire the precious gift which I now lack. The idea of loving you more is first in my mind, when I dream of seeing. Gaining my sight signifies to me nothing else than the power of admiring in a new way that which already causes me as much admiration as love. But I fancy you are sad to-day."

"Yes, I am; and if I must tell you the truth, I

do not know why. I am very glad and very sad, — the two things at the same time. This is such a gloomy day; it would be better that it should never be day and that it should always be night."

"No, no, leave it as it is. Night and day! If God should wish that at last I should know the difference, how happy I should be! Why are we stopping?"

"We are in a dangerous place. Let us go to one side to take the foot-path."

"Ah, La Trascava! This slippery grass goes down till it is lost in the cavern. Who falls in there never comes out again. Let us go to one side, Nela, I do not like this place."

"Fie! From here to the mouth of the cave is a long way to go. How beautiful it looks to-day!"

Nela, stopping and holding her companion by the arm, looked down into the funnel-shaped abyss. Finest grass covered the edges of the deep crater. In the bottom a great rock was imbedded in the grass among brambles, rushes, and countless bright flowers. Nela never tired of looking at it.

"Why do you say that this horrible Trascava is beautiful?" asked her friend.

"Because there are so many flowers in it. Last week they were all dead; but now they are alive again, and it is a delight to see them. Choto! Come here! Don't frighten the poor little birds!"

"This place frightens me," said Pablo, taking the girl's arm. "Now, let us go to the mines. Yes, I know the road. I am on my own ground. From here let us go straight to El Barco. Choto, go ahead! Don't get under my feet!"

They descended a sloping path and soon reached the hollow formed by the miners.

"Where is our seat," asked the Señorito de Penáguilas. "Let us go to it. The wind will not trouble us there."

As they seated themselves in the shadow of an enormous rock, Pablo said, —

"How pleasant it is here! Sometimes there is a little current of air through here, but to-day I feel nothing. I can only hear the sound of water there in La Trascava."

"It is rather silent to-day," said Nela. "What is it you wish to say?"

"Last night I did not sleep, thinking of what my father told me, of the doctor, and of my eyes. All night I was feeling a hand which was entering my eyes and opening a locked and rusty door."

Saying this, he seated himself on a stone and laid his head on Nela's lap.

"That door," he continued, "which was there in the depth of my consciousness, was opened, as I have said, giving entrance to a room wherein had been locked the idea that pursued me. Ah, Nela, my little love, if God should give me this gift which I long for! With it, I should think myself the happiest of men, — I, who am now almost that, with you for the friend and companion of my life. I long to see you and to enjoy your beauty. I am full of your beauty, but there is something in it which does not yet belong to me."

"Do you not hear it," said Nela, suddenly showing interest in a matter very distant from what her friend was saying.

"What?"

"In there. La Trascava. It is speaking."

"You superstitious child! The water does not speak, dear Nela. What language does a jet of water know? There are only two things that speak, little one, — the tongue and the conscience."

"And La Trascava," said Nela, paling. "It is a murmur, a 'yes, yes, yes.' Sometimes I hear my mother's voice say clearly, 'My daughter, how pleasant it is here!'"

"That is your imagination. The imagination also speaks. I forgot to mention that. At times mine chatters so that I have to silence it."

"Now it sounds as if it were crying. It is getting fainter, losing its voice," said Nela.

Soon a light gust of wind came from the grotto.

"Did you not hear it draw a deep sigh? Now I hear the voice again; it speaks low, and it tells me very faintly, very faintly —"

"What does it say to you?"

"Nothing," brusquely replied Nela, after a pause. "You said it was foolishness; you are right."

"I shall put those absurd ideas out of your head," said Pablo, taking her hand. "We are to live together all our lives. Ah, my God, if

I am not to have the faculty of which I was deprived at my birth, why hast Thou given me hope? Little one, I swear that you and I shall never be separated with my consent. I shall have sight, Nela, I shall have sight, and power to enjoy your heavenly beauty, and then we shall be married. You will be my beloved wife; you will be the life of my life; you will be the joy and pride of my soul. Have you nothing to say?"

Nela caressed Pablo's beautiful head. She wished to speak, but her emotion was too great.

"And even if God does not give me sight, you shall not be separated from me; you shall still be my wife, if it is not repugnant to you to be tied to a blind man. No, no, little one, I do not wish to impose on you so painful a yoke. You will meet men of merit who will love you and who can make you happy. I swear to you that I will love you while I live, blind or seeing. Why do you not speak to me?"

"I love you dearly, very dearly," said Nela, putting her cheek to that of her friend; "but do not be so eager to see me. Perhaps I am not so lovely as you think."

While saying this, Nela had searched in her pocket and drawn forth a bit of looking-glass, a piece of a mirror that had been broken in the señora's house the week before, and looked at herself in it. Because of the smallness of the glass, she was forced to view herself by parts, successively and gradually; first an eye, then the forehead; removing it to a distance, it would take in half of her face. Alas, how sad was the result of her investigations! She gazed at the little glass, and great tears filled her eyes.

"Nela, a drop has fallen on my hand. Does it rain?"

"Yes, dear, it seems to rain," said Nela, sobbing.

"No, you are crying. My heart tells me so. Your soul and mine are united by a mysterious and divine tie; they cannot be separated. They are two parts of the same thing. Is it not so?"

"Yes, it is true."

"Your tears answer more clearly than anything you could say. Is it not true that you will love me the same whether they give me sight or I remain deprived of it?"

"The same, yes, the same," said Nela.

"And you will go with me?"

"Always, always."

"Hear me," said Pablo, with loving fervor, "if they should make me choose between blindness and losing you, I should prefer —"

"You would prefer not to see! Oh, how happy I am!"

"I should prefer not to see your beauty with my eyes, because I already see it clearly in my mind. Here you are within my heart, and you charm me more than anything else in the world."

"Yes, yes, yes, I am beautiful; I am very beautiful," exclaimed Nela, wildly.

"Listen," said Pablo, passionately. "I have a presentiment. It seems as if God were within me, telling me that I shall have sight, that I shall see you, that we shall be happy. Do you not feel the same?"

"I — my heart tells me that you will see me, but it tells me that we shall be parted."

"I shall see your beauty. What happiness!" he exclaimed. "Yes, I see it now within me, clear as the truth."

"Yes, yes," repeated Nela, her eyes frightened and her lips trembling. "I am beautiful, — I am very beautiful!"

"God bless you!"

"And you," she added, kissing him on the forehead, "are you sleepy?"

"Yes, I begin to feel sleepy; I did not sleep last night. I am so comfortable here."

"Sleep, dear one."

She began to sing as to a sleepy child. Pablo soon slept. Nela heard again the voice of La Trascava, saying, "My daughter, here, here!"

IX.

THE GOLFINS.

TEODORO GOLFIN found it pleasant in Socartes. The first day after his arrival, he spent long hours in the laboratory with his brother, and on the following days, he explored the mines from one end to the other. During the evenings, when all was hushed in busy Socartes, Sofía, Don Cárlos Golfin's wife, delighted the good doctor, who was an enthusiastic musician, with her playing on the piano.

The two brothers had the strongest affection for each other. Born of the humblest class, they had from an early age fought alone to rise from their poverty and ignorance, seeing themselves at times on the verge of defeat. The impulse of an heroic will so aided them that at length, panting, they reached the longed-for shore, leaving behind them

the turbulent waves in which so many are constantly being submerged.

Teodoro, who was the elder, was a doctor before Cárlos became an engineer. He assisted his brother with all his means, while the youth needed it, and when he saw him on the road to success, followed the yearnings of his venturesome heart, and went to America. There he worked with other famous European physicians, and soon acquired fame and money.

His large face, his bony forehead, his rebellious fore-lock, the fire of his eyes, and his large hands were sufficient to earn for him the sobriquet of "The black lion." In fact, he did seem like a lion, and, like the king of beasts, did not hesitate to show constantly the esteem in which he held himself. But this remarkable man's vanity was the most pardonable of all vanities, since it consisted in showing to the world his two titles to glory, — namely, his passion for surgery and his humble origin.

At the time of this story, he had recently come from America, with the avowed intention of living in Spain.

His brother Cárlos was a peace-loving, studious man, infatuated with mineralogy and metallurgy, until he placed these two mistresses a hundred degrees higher than his wife; for the rest, he and his wife lived in perfect harmony.

Sofía was an excellent woman of fine appearance, which was being daily lessened by a lamentable tendency to obesity. She had been told that the atmosphere of the mines would reduce corpulence, and for this reason had gone there to live, with the idea of staying a full year. She had no children, and her principal occupations were playing the piano and organizing charitable societies of women for the support of hospitals and schools. In Madrid, her activity had accomplished wonderful things. Aided by two or three women of good family, she had succeeded in carrying through more than twenty dramatic performances, as many masked balls, and six bull-fights, all for the benefit of the poor.

Among her caprices, which were usually of a very transitory nature, was one which perhaps was not so praiseworthy as succoring the needy, and which consisted in surrounding herself with

cats and dogs, giving to these animals an affection amounting almost to love. While living in Socartes, she had a toy-terrier, which had been brought by her order from England. It was fine and delicate, and spoiled like a child. It was called Líli and had cost £50 in London.

On fine days the Golfins walked; when the weather was unpleasant, they played the piano and sang, since Sofía had a certain shriek which in Socartes would pass for singing.

On the days when they walked they would lunch in the woods. One afternoon, late in September, a week after Teodoro's arrival, they were returning from their excursion in the following order: Líli, Sofía, Teodoro, Cárlos, — the path being so narrow that they were obliged to walk in single file. Líli wore a little blue blanket, embroidered with his mistress's monogram. Sofía carried her parasol over her shoulder, and Teodoro carried his cane in the same position, with his hat on the end of it. They were passing La Trascava, when Líli, leaving the path, began scratching the grass at the edge of the cave with his elastic little paws, which were like springs. At

first, he was running, then slipping. Sofía gave a cry of terror. Her first impulse, dictated by an affection which seemed almost maternal, was to run after the animal so near to danger; but her husband held her, saying, "Let Líli go to the devil, woman. You cannot go down there; the grass is very slippery."

"Líli! Líli!" called Sofía, hoping that her loving cries might stop the animal on his road to ruin, and bring him back to the path of virtue.

The tenderest tones had no effect on the rebellious mind of Líli, who continued to descend. At times he looked at his mistress and with his expressive little black eyes seemed to say to her, "Señora, for the love of Heaven, don't be such a fool!"

Líli stopped on the great mossy rock which hid the mouth of the chasm. All eyes were fixed on the spot. They observed a moving object, which they thought was some animal hidden behind the rock; but Sofía gave another cry of astonishment and terror.

"Why, it is Nela! What are you doing there, Nela?"

On hearing her name the girl showed herself, blushing and confused.

"What are you doing there, you crazy child?" repeated the dame. "Catch Líli and bring him to me! Bless me! What is the creature doing? See where he has gone! It is your fault that Líli has gone down there. You teach him such things! It is because of you that he is so unruly and capricious."

"That girl has the skin of Barrabas," said Don Cárlos to his brother. "See where she has gone!"

While this talk was being carried on upon the edge of La Trascava, down below Nela was trying to catch Líli, who, more daring and reckless than ever before in his monotonous life, was darting about to avoid the girl's hands. Sofía called to him, exhorting him to be careful; but he, forgetful of the most common notions of duty, began to caper about, and to look impudently at his mistress, as if to say, "Señora, will you go away and leave me in peace?" At length he fell among the brambles which covered the mouth of the cave, and was securely held by the thorns which caught his blanket.

"Nela! Nela!" called Sofía, sobbing, "if you will bring him to me I will give you a big dog. Take him out! Be careful! Clutch him firmly!"

Nela slid daringly down, putting her foot upon the brambles and stout shrubs which covered the abyss; and holding to the jagged rocks with one hand she stretched the other to catch Lili's tail, by which she drew him up to safety. Caressing the animal, she climbed triumphantly to the path.

"It is all your fault," said Sofía, ill-naturedly, boxing the girl's ears, "because you go down there. You know he goes wherever you do. A pretty trick!"

Presently, after kissing the misguided animal and administering a couple of slaps and assuring herself that he was uninjured, she arranged his blanket and passed him to Nela, saying to her, —

"Carry him in your arms, because he will be tired, and these long jaunts are dangerous for him. Now, take care! Go ahead of us! See, I am going behind to watch what you do."

The family resumed the march, preceded by Nela, over whose shoulders Lili looked at his mis-

tress and seemed to say, "Oh, señora, what a fool you are!"

Teodoro Golfin had said nothing during the touching danger of the beautiful Lili, but when they reached the meadows where the three could go side by side, the doctor said to his brother's wife, —

"I am thinking, dear Sofía, that that animal occupies you too much. It is true that a dog that costs £50 is unlike any other dog. I have been asking myself why you take the time and trouble to make this canine an overcoat, and why it has not occurred to you to buy Nela some shoes."

"Shoes for Nela!" exclaimed Sofía, laughing. "And I ask, what does she want them for? It would take her but two days to spoil them. You may laugh at me as much as you wish. I know that caring so much for Lili is an extravagance, but you cannot accuse me of lack of charity. Stop there! That is something I cannot permit. And as to knowing how to practise charity with prudence and judgment, I think there is no one better versed than I. Charity does not consist in

giving, without rhyme or reason, where the certainty does not exist that the alms will be well employed. If you should wish to give me lectures, remember, Teodoro, that in this matter I know as much as you do in the treatment of eyes."

"Yes, I know it. I know, dear, that you have accomplished wonderful things. Do not tell me again of the dramatic performances, masked balls, and bull-fights organized by your ingenuity to relieve the poor, nor of the raffles which, putting large sums at stake, have fed innumerable idlers, leaving for the sick only a small balance. All this only convinces me of the singularity of the customs of a society that does not know how to be charitable without dancing, bull-fighting, and raffling. Let us not speak of that. I know of those heroic deeds, and wonder at them. But you and your friends seldom go to a sufferer to learn from his own lips the cause of his misery, or even to discover the nature of the misery that afflicts him; nor do you realize that there are some that are not to be relieved by the easy charity of dollars nor with broken bread."

"Now we have our philosopher all afield," said

Sofía, in bad humor. "What do you know regarding what I have done or left undone?"

"Do not be vexed, dear," said Golfin. "All my arguments are going to stop at one point, and that is, that you should have bought shoes for Nela."

"Well, to-morrow I shall buy them."

"No, because I shall buy them to-night. Do not encroach on my domains, señora."

"Hey! Nela!" called Sofía, seeing that the girl was at quite a distance. "Do not keep so far away. I want to see you and know what you are doing."

"Poor creature!" said Cárlos. "Who would suppose that she is sixteen years old?"

"She is indeed backward. It is so unfortunate!" exclaimed Sofía. "I ask myself why God permits such creatures to live, and I also ask myself what can be done for her. Nothing, nothing, but to feed and clothe her up to a certain point. You can see how she spoils everything placed on her. Jumping among the rocks, swinging from the trees, and playing all day, whatever is put on her is soon reduced to rags."

"I have observed in Nela," said Cárlos, "great intelligence and quickness of ingenuity. No, Nela is not a fool, nor anything like it. Had any one taken the trouble to teach her anything, she would have learned faster, perhaps, than the majority of children. Nela has imagination, and through having that and lacking the most rudimentary teaching, she is sentimental and superstitious. Only yesterday I passed by La Trascava and saw her in the same place in which we saw her to-day. I called her, made her come out, and asked her what she did there. With the greatest simplicity she told me that she was talking with her mother. Her mother, you know, threw herself into that chasm."

"That is to say, she committed suicide," said Sofía. "She was a woman of bad life and worse ideas, I have heard. Cárlos was not here; but we have been told that she drank like a stoker. And I ask myself if beings so degraded, who end a life of crime with the greatest crime of all, which is suicide, merit the compassion of the human race. There are persons who ought never to have been born. No, señor. And Teodoro

can use all the subtleties he chooses, but I ask myself — "

"No, no, do not ask yourself anything, dear sister," said Golfin. "I will answer that suicide merits the liveliest compassion. It would be well to investigate the causes which carried her to such an extreme of desperation. I would ask if society, by abandoning her absolutely, had not left open the door of this horrible abyss which they call — "

"Abandoned by society! There are some who are," said Sofia, pertly. "Society cannot protect all. Look at the statistics, Teodoro. But if society should abandon a person, what is her religion for?"

"I refer to the miserable hopelessness which joins to all other miseries the greatest misery, — which is ignorance. The debased, superstitious, and ignorant possess only vague and absurd notions of religion. The unknown, far from deterring them, urges them on to commit crime. Rarely will the religious idea benefit him who vegetates in ignorance. No intelligent friend, master, or priest approaches him; only the judge

who is to send him to the jail. It is singular that you should, with so much harshness, condemn your own work," he added, hoisting his stick with his hat on the end of it. "You see before you, at the very doors of your comfortable homes, a multitude of neglected beings, lacking everything that is necessary to childhood, from parents to playthings; you see them — yes, but it never occurs to you to instil in them a little self-respect, making them know that they are human beings, giving them the ideas that they lack. You see them living in filthy hovels, poorly fed, sinking daily in more savage ignorance, and it does not occur to you to offer them a few of the comforts with which you are surrounded. You reserve your energy to declaim against murder, theft, and suicide, without reflecting that you are sustaining a permanent school for these three crimes."

"You forget that there are charitable asylums," said Sofía, tartly. "Read the statistics, Teodoro, and you will see the number of unfortunates."

"I do not need to read the statistics, dear sister. The asylums are good, but they do not solve the

great problem which orphanhood offers. I have an idea on this subject, — an idea of my own. It may appear absurd to you."

"Give it to us."

"The problem of orphanhood and infantile misery will never be entirely solved, nor its companions, the other social problems. But there will be a relief from this great evil when custom, aided by law, — by law; you see this is not a thing to play with, — establishes that any orphan, whatever may be its origin, — do not laugh, — may have a right to enter as an adopted child the house of any comfortable family which has no children. Then these things would be so arranged that there would be no parents without children, and no children without parents."

"With your system," said Sofía, "these things would be so arranged that we should act as Nela's parents."

"Why not?" replied Teodoro. "Then we should not spend £50 buying a dog, nor should we spend all the blessed day playing tricks for Señorito Lili."

"But why should rich bachelors be exempt

from this gracious law? Why should not each one of them take charge of an orphan?"

"I am in favor of it," said the doctor, looking at the ground. "But what is that, — blood?"

All looked at the ground, where they saw blood-stains at regular distances.

"Mercy!" said Sofía. "It is Nela. See how she has hurt her feet."

"It shows now how she had to drag herself among the brambles to catch your precious Líli. Nela, come here."

Nela, her right foot bleeding, limped toward them.

"Give me poor Líli," said Sofía, taking the dog from Nela's arms. "Does it pain you much? *Pobrecita!* That is dreadful. Oh, how much blood! I cannot look at it!"

Sensitive and nervous, Sofía turned her back, caressing Líli.

"Let me see what it is," said Teodoro, seating himself on a stone, and taking Nela in his arms. Putting on his glasses, he examined the foot.

"It is a slight thing, — two or three scratches.

I think you have a thorn in there. Does it hurt? Yes, here it is. Wait a minute. Sofía, go ahead, if it troubles you to see a surgical operation."

While Sofía went on a few paces in order to place her precious nervous system beyond the reach of a shock, Teodoro drew some pincers from a case, and in a twinkling extracted the thorn.

"Good for the brave little woman!" he said, observing Nela's serenity. "Now let us bandage the foot." With his handkerchief he deftly tied it up.

Marianela tried to walk. Cárlos gave her his hand.

"No, no," said Teodoro, taking her by the arms, "come here." With a quick movement, he lifted her to his right shoulder.

"If you are not secure, grasp my hair; it is strong. Now carry the stick with the hat."

"What a sight!" exclaimed Sofía, laughing, as she saw Nela seated on Teodoro's shoulder and holding the stick, which was surmounted with Gessler's hat.

X.

HISTORY OF THE SONS OF THE PEOPLE.

"HERE, dear Sofía," said Teodoro, "you have a man who can turn his hand to anything. This is the result of our education, is n't it, Cárlos? We were not brought up as spoiled children, for since our tenderest infancy we have accustomed ourselves to the idea that there is absolutely nobody inferior to us. The men who have made themselves as we have made ourselves; those who without assistance from anybody, nor any aid but their will and noble ambition, have succeeded in the struggle for existence, are the only ones who know how the needy must be treated. I confess that I do not possess the lovely virtue of modesty to any great degree. I do not lack vanities, and among them is the vanity of having been a beggar; of having asked alms

from door to door; of having gone barefoot with my little brother Cárlos; and of having slept with him in doorways, without shelter, without protection, without family. I had an inspiration. I comprehended that two paths opened before us: one to prison, one to glory. I carried my poor little brother on my shoulder, as to-day I am carrying Nela, and said, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, save us.' He did save us. I learned to read, and taught my brother; I served various masters, who fed me and allowed me to go to school. I saved my wages; I bought a money-box. I hoarded all to buy books. I do not know how I got into the medical college, but that is where I was while my brother was gaining his bread as an errand-boy in a store."

"What things to recall!" exclaimed Sofía, peevishly, because that theme did not please her. "And I ask myself what is the use of reciting such puerilities. Besides, you exaggerate very much."

"I exaggerate nothing," said Teodoro, with spirit. "Señora, be silent and listen. I entered the college, as God wished. I learned, as God

wished. A blessed priest gave me good advice and helped me with money. I felt a love for medicine. How to study it without leaving my work to procure food? Terrible problem! Dear Cárlos, do you remember when we two entered a barber-shop in old Cofreros Street, to ask for work? We had never had a razor in our hands, but it was necessary to earn our living by shaving. At first we only assisted. Do you remember, Cárlos? Afterwards, we used those noble instruments ourselves. Phlebotomy was our salvation. I began to study anatomy. The scholastic work was such that I was forced to abandon the barber-shop of that famous master, Cayetano. The day on which I left he cried. He gave me two dollars, and his wife presented me with some of her husband's old trousers. I entered service as a valet. God protected me, giving me good friends always. My fondness for study interested those kind men, who left me at liberty as much as they could. I studied in my waking hours, I studied in my sleep. While cleaning the clothes, I reviewed in my memory the parts of the human skeleton. I remember that brushing my master's clothing served me for studying the muscles.

While cleaning a sleeve, I said, 'deltoid, biceps, cubital;' and on the trousers, 'sartorius, tibial,' etc. In that house they gave me what was left from the table, and I carried it to my brother, who was living in the house of a worthy pawnbroker. Do you remember, Cárlos?"

"Yes, I do remember," said Cárlos, with emotion; "and I was thankful to find some one who would give me a lodging for a little service in delivering bills. Soon I had the happiness to stumble on that retired colonel, who taught me elementary mathematics."

"Well, there is no ragged fellow whom you do not try to drag out of the streets now," observed Sofía.

"My brother asked me for bread, and I answered, 'Did you say bread? Take mathematics.' One day my master gave me passes for the theatre. I took my brother, and we enjoyed it greatly; but Cárlos took cold and had pneumonia. Terrible misfortune! That was receiving a gun-shot at the beginning of the battle. But no! who is dismayed? A professor of the faculty, who had taken a strong liking to me, offered to attend him."

"It was a miracle that he saved me in that dirty little hole, a storehouse of old rags, iron, and leather."

"God was with us, that is clear. He was on our side. Oh, I know well by whom I was being led!" pursued Teodoro, with the nervous, rapid eloquence which was as characteristic of him as were his dishevelled hair and leonine head. "It was necessary that I should do without clothes that my brother might have medicine. The pharmacopœia and wearing-apparel could not go together. Prescription after prescription, the sick boy consumed my cape, then my frock-coat. My trousers were converted into pills. But my masters did not abandon me. I had clothes again, and my brother was able once more to be out in the street. The doctor said he should go to the country during his convalescence. I meditated. To the country? He should go to the School of Mines. My brother was a great mathematician. I taught him chemistry; soon he began to show a fondness for minerals, and before he entered the School of Mines he went into the country near San Isidro to collect specimens. I continued my

battle with waves and hurricanes. Each day I became more skilful as a physician. A famous surgeon took me for an assistant. I aided him like a sister of charity. He died, leaving me a legacy, — a generous thing! It consisted of a cane, an instrument for rolling cigarettes, a hunting-horn, and four thousand *reales* in money. A fortune!

"Now my brother had books, and I had clothing; and when I dressed like a gentleman I began to have patients. It seemed as if humanity lost health solely to give me employment. Years passed. At last, after grievous troubles, I saw in the distance a port of refuge. My brother and I were rowing now without great exertion. We were no longer sad. God smiled on us. Good for the Golfins! God had lent them a hand. I began to study the eyes, and in a short time I had mastered the treatment for cataract; but I was still ambitious. I gained some money, but my brother needed a great deal. At last Cárlos came out of the School. After seeing him located in Riotinto with a good salary, I went to America. I had been a species of Columbus, the Columbus

of work, and a species of Hernan Cortés. I had discovered within myself a new world, and after discovering it, had conquered it."

"Praise yourself," said Sofía, smiling.

"If there are heroes in the world, you are one of them," said Cárlos, showing profound admiration for his brother.

"Prepare yourself now, Señor Demi-God," said Sofía, "to crown all your exploits by performing a miracle, — the miracle of giving sight to a person blind from birth. See, there comes Don Francisco to receive us!"

Advancing along the top of the hill, they had reached Aldeacorba and the house of Señor de Penáguilas, who, throwing on his jacket with all speed, came forth to meet his friends. Night was falling.

XI.

THE PATRIARCH OF ALDEACORBA.

"THEY are already ordering milk," he said, before saluting them. "I suppose that all will take it. How are you, Doña Sofía, and you, Don Teodoro? That is a good load you are carrying on your shoulders. What ails María Canela? A little illness?"

All entered the *patio* of the house. They heard the lowing of the cows, that had just entered the stable, and this sound joined to the grateful odor of the hay, which the servants were taking up to the hay-loft, came pleasantly to the senses.

The doctor seated Nela on a stone bench, and she, paralyzed by this attention, dared not make a motion, and looked at her benefactor with astonishment.

"Where is Pablo?" asked the engineer.

"He has just gone down to the orchard," answered Señor de Penáguilas, offering a rustic chair to Sofía. "Go and keep him company, Nela."

"No, no, I do not wish her to go yet," objected Teodoro, detaining her. "Besides, she is going to take milk with us."

"Do you not wish to see my son this afternoon?" asked Don Francisco.

"Yesterday's examination was sufficient for me," replied Golfín. "I can perform the operation."

"With success?"

"With success! No one can tell that. What a pleasure it would be to me to give sight to one who so richly merits it. At times, I say to myself that if we were to give him sight, we should convert him from an angel into a man. We have a problem and a doubt here. But we will make him a man. That is the duty of science. We will bring him from the world of illusions into the sphere of reality, and then with his powerful brain he will indeed be a type of the highest intelligence. Then his ideas will be exact, and he

will have the power of appreciating all things at their true value."

They brought out the glasses of foaming white milk. Penáguilas offered the first to Sofía, and the gentlemen helped themselves to the other two. Teodoro offered his to Nela, who, overcome by diffidence, refused to take it.

"Come, Nela," said Sofía, "do not be ill-bred! Take what they give you."

"Another glass for Señor Don Teodoro," said Don Francisco to the servant.

"And he will appreciate all things at their true value," said Don Francisco, repeating the doctor's phrase, which had made no small impression on his mind. "You have said an admirable thing, Don Teodoro. And now that we are on this subject, I wish to confide to you the uneasiness that I have felt for several days."

Don Francisco made himself comfortable on a bench close by. Teodoro, Cárlos, and Sofía had seated themselves in chairs brought from the house, and Nela remained on the stone bench. The milk which she had just taken had left a little white mustache on her upper lip.

"As I was saying, Don Teodoro, for days I have been disquieted by the state of exaltation in which I find my son. I attribute it to the hope which we have given him. But there is something more, something more. You know I am accustomed to read various books to him. I think that his mind has been too much excited, and it has developed a mass of ideas too great for the capacity of the brain of a man who does not see. I think that his mind is full of a thousand errors, through ignorance of the visible world. It cannot be otherwise. Pablo possesses a spirit of unwearied inquiry; but this spirit of investigation is a brave bird with broken pinions. For days he has not slept, and his enthusiasm amounts to delirium. He wishes me to read new books to him every hour. He gives utterance to great absurdities, insists upon them, and one dares not contradict him. I fear that he is going insane. If you could see how sad and thoughtful he is at times! He takes up a subject and discusses it, and does not exhaust it in a week. For several days he has had a theme as amusing as original. He thinks that Nela is beautiful."

They laughed, and Nela grew crimson.

"That Nela is beautiful!" exclaimed Teodoro. "Well, so she is."

"I think so, now that she has a white mustache," said Sofía.

"Yes, she is lovely," added Teodoro, touching her cheek. "Sofía, give me your handkerchief. There, off with the mustache."

Don Francisco told her to join his son; and, limping, she entered the house.

"And when I contradict him," added the Señor of Aldeacorba, "my son answers that perhaps the gift of sight prevents me from seeing the truth of things aright."

"Do not contradict him, and for the present suspend the readings altogether. For some days he must adopt a regimen of absolute tranquillity. It is necessary to treat the brain with great consideration before beginning an operation of this kind."

"If God should permit my son to see," said Don Francisco, "I should look upon you as the greatest, the most beneficent of men. The darkness of his eyes is the darkness of my life. I am

rich; but of what use are my riches? Nothing that he cannot see is pleasing to me. A month ago I received news of the inheritance of a large fortune — you know that my cousin Faustino has died in Matamoras. He had no children. My brother Manuel and I are the heirs. This is throwing pearls before swine. I do not say this is so in my brother's case, as he has a beautiful daughter, but for my miserable self, who have not the power to make my only son enjoy the pleasures of a good position."

A long silence followed these words, interrupted only by the lowing of the cattle in the neighboring stable.

"As soon as my brother Manuel heard of my hope in regard to Pablo," continued the patriarch of Aldeacorba, "he began to make plans. See what he said to me!"

He drew forth several letters, which he turned over for a moment, before finding the one he sought.

"In short, he is wild with delight, and has said to me: 'My Florentina shall marry your Pablo, and so we shall have placed at compound interest

Cousin Faustino's half-million *pesos*.' I expect Manuel and his daughter every day. They are coming to spend October with me, and to see the result of the attempt to give sight to my son. My brother's happiness and my own depend on my having a son to offer as a husband for Florentina, who is as beautiful as the Virgin Mary. My blind son will not serve for the purpose, but my son Pablo with the power of vision will be the realization of all my dreams."

All were silent, deeply impressed by the kind father's simple and pathetic words.

"What do you say to that, Teodoro?" asked Cárlos.

"I say nothing but that I have carefully examined the case, and do not find sufficient reason for saying, 'There is no cure,' as the famous doctors whom our friend has consulted have said. We will see. Have you courage, Don Francisco?"

"Courage? Why should I have courage?"

"Great courage is needed to undertake this case. Your son may suffer a painful operation and be as blind as before. I repeat that the

impossibility of cure is not yet demonstrated. Shall I perform the operation?"

"Yes, perform the operation and fulfil the will of God."

"In this climate the operation can be performed in the first days of October. To-morrow we will fix the treatment to which the patient must be subjected. And now let us go, as it feels chilly on these heights."

Penáguilas offered supper to his friends, but they refused. All went forth together, with Nela, whom Teodoro wished to carry with him, and Don Francisco kept them company as far as the forge. When the Golfins entered their house, Don Francisco, alone and sad, returned to his own. He was thinking of the terrible days of anxiety and of hope, of exaltation and of doubt, which were in store for him. On the road he met Choto, and both went slowly up the hill. Don Francisco, having no other being to whom he could confide the thoughts which crowded his brain, said, "Choto, what will come of it?"

XII.

DOCTOR CELIPÍN.

SEÑOR CENTENO, after refreshing his spirit in the badly-written columns of the "Daily," and the señora, after tasting the most intoxicating delight of testing the weight of the coin contained in the stocking, went to bed. The children had gone somewhat earlier. The family of stone was soon sleeping.

When all in the house had gone to the same limbo, a slight noise, as of mice coming from their holes in search of food, was heard in the kitchen. The baskets opened, and Nela whispered:

"Celipín, I have brought you a fine present to-night. Look!"

Celipín could distinguish nothing, but, extending his hand, took from Nela two big dollars,

whose genuineness he verified by touch, as it was too dark to see them, and remained mute with astonishment.

"Don Teodoro gave them to me," added Nela, "to buy me some shoes. As I do not need shoes, I will give the money to you, and then you will soon get enough."

"*Corcholis!* You are the best girl! I lack only a little now, Nela, and as soon as I get half a dozen *reales*, they shall see who Celipín is!"

"Listen, Celipín! the man who gave me that money went through the streets begging when he was a child, and afterwards —"

"*Corcholis!* Who said so? Don Teodoro? And now he has so much money! They say that six mules could not carry what he has."

"And he slept in the streets and was a servant and went barefoot, and, in fact, was poorer than a rat. His brother, Don Cárlos, lived in an old junk-shop."

"*Corcholis!* What strange things there are in this world! I will look for an old junk-shop, too."

"And afterwards he had to be a barber to earn his living and get means to study."

"Look here! I am thinking of going straight to a barber-shop. I am just the one to shave. After I get to Madrid, shaving and studying, in two months I shall learn all the business. It has just occurred to me that I ought to aim to be a doctor, — yes, a doctor, who puts one hand on the pulse, and holds out the other to the patient and has it filled with money."

"Don Teodoro had less than you," said Nela, "because you are going to have five *duros*, and with five *duros* it seems to me that everything must be easy for you. Don Teodoro and Don Cárlos were like two birds alone in the world. They persevered, and got an education. Don Teodoro studied diseases, and Don Cárlos, stones; and so the two made themselves capable and useful. Celipín, if you could have seen me this afternoon when he carried me on his shoulder! And he gave me a glass of milk, looking at me as he looks at the señoras."

"All smart men are like that," observed Celipín, petulantly. "You will see how fine and gallant I am going to be, when I put on my frock-coat and my hat a yard high! And I think I

shall cover my hands with what they call gloves, and I think I shall never take them off except to feel the pulse. I shall have a cane with a gold head, and I shall dress myself — of course I shall put only fine cloth on my body. *Corcholis!* you will laugh when you see me."

"Do not think yet of soaring, since you have no more feathers than an egg," said Nela. "Go little by little. To-day learn this; to-morrow, that. I advise you before you learn to heal the sick to learn to write, so that you may send a letter to your mother, asking her to forgive you, and telling her that you have left home to educate yourself, to make yourself like Don Teodoro, and to be a skilful doctor."

"Hush! were you thinking that writing would not be the first? Let me take a pen in my hand, and you will see such flourishes of letters and such fine lines above and below, like Don Francisco Penáguilas's signature. To write! In four days you shall see what letters I will write. You shall hear them read, and you shall see what ideas I have. Nela, you do not know that I have a great deal of talent, — I feel it here in my head,

making it go *burumbum, burumbum,* like the water in a steam-boiler, so that I cannot sleep; and I think it is because all the sciences are entering my head and flying through, haphazard, like bats, and telling me to study them. All, all the sciences I must learn, and not one must I leave. You shall see."

"Well, you ought to have many. Pablo Penáguilas, who knows them all, says there are many, and that a man's whole life is not long for learning one alone."

"That is ridiculous! You will see me —"

"And the best of all is that which Don Cárlos has; because, you see, that is to take a stone and make brass with it. Others say they make silver and gold also. Study that, Celipillo."

"Don't deceive yourself. There is nothing like taking a person's wrist and looking at his tongue and telling in a minute in which bone of his body the pain is. They say that Don Teodoro takes out a person's eye and puts in a new one, and that the man can see with it as well as with the one with which he was born. What a great thing it is to see a man who is dying, and

to tell him to take, well, for instance, half a dozen mosquitos stewed on Monday, with willow-twigs picked by a girl called Juana, and to leave him well and strong! You shall see, you shall see how Don Celipín of Socartes will conduct himself! I tell you I shall be talked about clear to Havana."

"Well, well," said Nela, cheerily, "see that you are a good son, and then, if your parents do not wish to teach you, it is because they have no talent; and since you have it, pray to the Holy Virgin for them, and do not fail to send them something of all you are going to gain."

"I 'll surely do that. Although I am going away from home, it is not that I wish ill to my parents; and you shall see how, within a little time, a man loaded with great packages will come from the station. What will it be? Well, dresses for my mother and sisters, and a high hat for my father. I shall send a pair of earrings to you."

"Very appropriate presents," said Nela, smothering a laugh. "Earrings for me!"

"But now I have thought of something. Do

you want me to tell you? Well, it is that you ought to go with me; then there being two of us, we could help each other to gain and to learn. You, too, have talent, I can see, and you can as easily become a lady as I a gentleman. How I should laugh to see you playing the piano, like Señora Sofía!"

"What a fool you are!" said Nela. "I am good for nothing. If I should be with you, I should be a trouble to you."

"They say they are going to give sight to Don Pablo, and when he can see, there is nothing for you to do in Socartes. What do you think of my idea? Why don't you answer?"

Some time passed without a reply from Nela. Celipín again questioned her and received no response.

"Go to sleep, Celipín," she said at last. "I am very sleepy."

"I will, if my talent will let me get to sleep."

A few minutes later, he was seeing himself, in figure like Don Teodoro, putting new eyes in old orbits, bandaging broken legs, dragging suffering humanity from death by means of copious potions

of mosquitos stewed on Monday, with willow-twigs picked by a maiden. He saw himself dressed in the richest clothing, with perfumed gloves, and riding in a carriage which was drawn by swans instead of horses, summoned by kings, invited by queens, sought by honest dames, flattered by magnates, and carried in triumph through all the world.

XIII.

BETWEEN TWO BASKETS.

NELA shut the baskets that she might be more alone. Let us follow her. Let us penetrate her thoughts. But first let us give something of her history.

Having had absolutely no instruction in her youth, Marianela had formed for herself some very singular ideas, an extravagant theogony, and an unusual power of appreciating cause and effect. Teodoro Golfin's comparison of Nela's mind with that of the primitive races was correct. As in them, so in her, the fascination of the marvellous was dominant; she believed in supernatural powers distinct from the one great God, and in natural objects she saw vague personalities which did not lack ways of communication with men.

In spite of this, Nela was not complet[e]
rant of the Gospel. She had ne[w]

taught about it, but she had heard of it. She saw people going to a ceremony they called Mass; she had an idea of a sublime sacrifice; beyond that her ideas did not reach. By virtue of the sentiment of those about her, she had been accustomed to respect the Christ crucified; she knew that his image should be kissed; she knew, besides, some prayers that she had learned by rote; she knew that what she wished for should be asked of God; but nothing more. The great neglect of her intelligence until the time of her meeting with the Señorito de Penáguilas was the cause of this. And the friendship of that extraordinary being, who from his darkness viewed the problems of life with the daring eye of thought, had come too late. In Nela's mind was already crystallized what we may call her philosophy, — a mixture of paganism, sentimentalism, and I know not what, fashioned by herself. It should be added that in spite of living so entirely outside of the common sphere in which all others lived, she showed good sense almost always, and knew how to judge wisely of the affairs [illegible]s has been seen in the advice which she

The strongest tendency of her spirit was that which urged her with secret passion to love physical beauty wherever she found it. There is nothing more natural for a being bred outside the pale of society and in open and constant communication — in familiar intercourse, we may say — with Nature peopled with gracious beauties, full of light and color, of eloquent murmurs and diverse forms. But Marianela had mixed adoration with her admiration, and had personified all the beauties which she adored in a single ideal, and under a human form. That was the Virgin Mary. This would not have been for her the ideal most beloved, if to the moral perfections of the Virgin had not been added all physical beauties and graces; if she had not had a face nobly-formed and attractive, a countenance at once human and divine, which appeared to the child the embodiment of all the light of the world, of all the melancholy peace of the night, of the music of the streams, of the grace and loveliness of the flowers, of the freshness of the dew, of the sweet whisperings of the wind, of the stainless snow of the mountains, of the loving glow of the stars, of the majestic pomp

of the clouds when they slowly float through the immensity of the sky.

The personality of God presented itself to her as terrible and frowning, more fitted to inspire awe than love. All good came from the Virgin Mary, and from her should be asked all that was needed. God frowned, but she smiled. God punished, but she pardoned.

This was the Nela who had been reared in Socartes, and with these vague ideas she had reached the age of fifteen. From that age her friendship with Pablo and her frequent talks with one who possessed so many good ideas, had somewhat modified her mode of thought, but the basis of her ideas underwent no change. She continued to give to physical beauty a certain august supremacy; she continued to hold her superstitions, and to adore the Holy Virgin as an epitome of all natural beauties, to make of her a moral law; and finished her system with the strangest ideas regarding death and the future life.

Locked in her shells María spoke thus: —

"Mother of God and my own, why did you not make me beautiful? When I was born why did

you not look on me from above? The more I look at myself the uglier I appear. Why am I in the world? Of what use am I? Whom can I interest? Only one, and he only because he cannot see me. What will become of me when he sees me and ceases to love me? For how is it possible that he should love me after seeing this small body, this shrunken figure, this freckled skin, this peaked nose, this discolored hair, this person of mine that is good for nothing, but receives kicks from the whole world? Who is Nela? Nobody. Nela is somebody only to the blind. If his eyes are opened now and he turns them on me and sees me, I shall fall dead. He is the only one to whom Nela is not less than the cats and dogs. He loves me as bridegrooms love their brides, — as God commands that such persons shall love. Holy Mother, now that you are going to perform the miracle of giving him sight, make me beautiful or kill me. I am nothing and nobody for all but one person. Am I sorry to have him gain his sight? No, not that, not that! I wish that he may see; I would give my eyes that he might see; I would give my whole life. I wish that Don Teodoro

may perform the miracle they speak of. What I do not wish is that my master shall see me. Mother mine, I will bury myself alive. I will throw myself into the river. Yes, yes; that the earth may swallow my ugliness! I ought not to have been born."

Presently, turning over in her basket, she continued: —

"My heart is all his. This dear blind one who loves me so much is the first one in the world for me, after the Virgin Mary. Oh, if I might be large and beautiful! if I might have the height, the face, the size, — above all, the size, — of other women! if I might be a lady and be dressed! Ah, then my greatest delight would be to have his eyes rest on me. If I might be like the rest, — even like Marinca, — how quickly would I seek the way to instruct myself, to become a lady! Mother, the only thing which I have is to be taken from me. Why did you permit me to love him and permit him to love me? This ought not to be so."

Crying and crossing her arms she added, half conquered by sleep, —

"Ah, how much I love you, sweetheart! Love Nela, the poor Nela, who is nobody. Love me much. Let me give you a kiss on your beautiful head, but do not open your eyes. Do not look at me. Shut them — so — so — "

XIV.

THE VIRGIN MARY APPEARS TO NELA.

THE thoughts which depart when we are conquered by sleep often return and lie in ambush to seize us when we awake. So it happened to Mariquilla. Having gone to sleep with the strangest thoughts about the Virgin Mary, the blind youth, and her own ugliness, which she was wishing to see changed into wonderful beauty, she wakened with the same thoughts when the señora's call drew her from her baskets. After she opened her eyes Nela said her prayer as usual to the Virgin Mary; but that day it was a medley, composed of her customary prayer and some portions of her own invention, producing a discourse that, if written, would be curious.

Among other things Nela said: —

"Last night you appeared to me in dreams, Señora, and promised me that to-day you would comfort me. I am awake, and it seems to me that I am still looking at you, — that I see before me your face, more lovely than all the beautiful things in the world."

As she said this Nela looked wildly about and thought, "Something is passing by me."

"What is the matter, Nela? What passed you, child?" said Señora Centeno, noticing that the girl was looking with astonished eyes at a fixed point in space. "Are you seeing visions, marmot?"

Nela did not answer, because her soul was absorbed in self-communion.

"Here, child!" called the señora, in her harsh, discordant voice; "come and wash that dog's face."

Nela ran. She had felt in her spirit an exaltation like that produced by the sudden invasion of a great hope. She looked at herself in the trembling surface of the water, and instantly felt her heart crushed.

"Nothing!" she murmured. "As ugly as

ever! The same child's figure with the soul and the years of a woman!"

After washing herself, she felt the same sensations which she had before experienced. Marianela in spite of her scant experience had the intelligence to classify these sensations as presentiments.

"Pablo and I," she thought, "have spoken of what is felt when a glad or a sorrowful thing is about to happen. Pablo has also told me that just before an earthquake people have an unusual feeling, — and animals, too. I wonder if there is going to be an earthquake."

Kneeling, she touched the ground.

"I do not know — but something is going to happen. That it is a good thing, I cannot doubt. The Virgin told me last night that to-day she would comfort me. What ails me? Is the Heavenly Señora about me? I do not see her, but I feel her. She is behind, she is before."

She looked at the sky, astonished to find it the same as usual, and hastened her step that she might soon reach Aldeacorba de Suso. Forsaking the usual route, she went by the road leading through the meadows. Along this road were lanes

filled with graceful and fragrant flowers, among which fluttered swarms of butterflies and bees; there were great briers full of dark fruit, and groups of wild cherries, to whose trunks clung the wild honeysuckle; there were stout live-oaks, beautiful and dark, which appeared to enjoy contemplating their own shade. Her fertile imagination at length found the formula most appropriate to express her emotions, and remembering to have heard, "Fulano or Zutano, he has the demons in his body," she said, —

"I have the angels in my soul. The Virgin Mary is with me to-day. That which I feel is the laughter of the angels who play within me."

Nela closed her eyes and opened them again. As she turned a bend in the road, she heard the branches rustle at her right. Great Heavens! There, within a green frame, was the Immaculate Virgin Mary, with her own face, her own eyes, which held in them all the beauty of the sky. Nela remained mute, petrified, and with a sensation which was fervor and fear at the same time. She could neither step, nor cry, nor move her eyes from that wonderful apparition.

The Virgin had appeared in the foliage, revealing her face and bust. She was indeed the true image of the chosen maiden of Nazareth, whose moral perfections the artists of eighteen centuries, from San Lúcas to our contemporaries, have tried to express in painted form. Humanity has seen that sacred person with different eyes, whether with those of Albert Dürer or Raphael, Van Eyck or Murillo. She who appeared to Nela was of the Raphaelesque type, which is the most perfect of all, if it is expected that the perfection of human beauty should approach more nearly than any other artistic embodiment to divinity. The oval of her face was less sharp than the Sevillian type, having the soft, graceful roundness of the Italian. Her eyes were serene, with a look as far removed from coldness as from the extreme, burning brightness of the Andalusian glances. Her eyebrows were delicately pencilled. On her forehead was neither the frown of trouble, nor the shadow of sadness; and lips a little full allowed one to see, when she smiled, the loveliest teeth that have ever bitten the apples of Paradise.

Her sudden amazement past, the first thing

which Nela observed, and which caused her much surprise, was that the beautiful Virgin had a blue neckerchief about her throat, an adornment that she had never seen in the Virgins dreamed of or painted. She immediately noticed also that the shoulders and breast of the divine maiden were covered by a dress similar to that worn by the women of to-day. But that which most disturbed and disconcerted the poor girl was the fact that the gentle image was picking mulberries and eating them.

She was trying to form an opinion regarding this strange conduct on the part of the Virgin, when she heard a loud, masculine voice, calling, —

"Florentina! Florentina!"

"Here I am, papa; here I am, eating wild mulberries."

"There it is again! What pleasure do you find in eating wild mulberries? Have I not told you that that was more becoming country children than a lady bred in good society — bred in good society?"

Nela saw the speaker slowly approach. He

was a medium-sized, somewhat chubby man, of mature age, who appeared to throw out rays of satisfaction, as the sun throws out rays of light. He was small of legs, large of nose, and magnificent with several decorations, among which were a massive watch-chain and a broad-brimmed hat of fine felt.

"Come, girl," said Don Manuel Penáguilas, for it was he, "well-bred persons do not eat wild mulberries, nor romp about so. Do you see? You have torn your dress. I do not speak on account of the dress, for as that was bought, so another can be bought. I speak because people may believe you have no other clothes than those you have on."

Nela, who was now beginning to understand the situation, observed the dress of the Señorita de Penáguilas. It was of good material; but the sudden transition from the state of a peasant to that of a wealthy señorita was very plainly shown. Her whole attire, from head to foot, was that of a peasant-girl on a saint's day. Such, however, were the charms of Florentina that no infraction of the rules of elegance and good taste could obscure

them. Nevertheless it could not be denied that she would have been more appropriately dressed in a short peasant skirt, with her hair in affectedly careless braids adorned with poppies, a sleeveless jacket, a string of corals, — in short, all that the instinct of vanity would suggest, when untempered by the usages of society.

When the señorita left the mulberry-tree, Don Manuel saw Nela, just after she had discovered her mistake, and turning toward her, he said, —

"Halloo! Are you here? See, Florentina, this is Nela. You remember I spoke to you of her. She is the one who guides your cousin — your cousin. How are you?"

"I am well, Señor Don Manuel," responded Nela, without removing her eyes from Florentina.

"This is my daughter. What do you think of her?"

Florentina ran after a butterfly.

"My daughter, what are you doing?" asked the father, plainly vexed. "Does it seem proper for you to run, like peasant children, after insects? Be more dignified, daughter. Ladies brought up in good society do not do so — do not do so."

Don Manuel had a habit of repeating the last phrases of his sentences.

"Do not be vexed, papa," said the girl, returning, after an unfruitful chase, to place herself under the protection of the wings of the paternal hat. "You know I like the country, and that I become wild when I see trees, flowers, and fields, because in that dreary land of Campó where we live there is nothing like this."

"Oh, do not speak ill of Santa Irene de Campó, a village where many comforts and a select society are to be found, as well as modern improvements — modern improvements. You can admire Nature while walking sedately by my side. I also admire, and without skipping like a rope-dancer. Educated people in select society are known by their way of walking and of looking at things. This habit of saying each instant, 'Ah! Oh! How pretty! Look, papa!' is not in good taste. People will think that you have been brought up in a desert. So keep by my side. Nela will tell us where to turn to go to the house, for, to tell the truth, I do not know where we are."

"You must turn to the left and go behind

that old house. But here comes Señor Don Francisco."

Don Francisco appeared, calling, —

"The chocolate is getting cold."

"My daughter was so desirous of romping through the country, that she did not wish to wait for the chocolate, and here you see her going from tree to tree like a little goat — like a little goat."

"To the house! To the house! You come also, Nela, and have some chocolate," said Penáguilas, putting his hand on Nela's head. "What think you of my niece? Is n't she lovely? Florentina, after you have had your chocolate, Nela will take you to walk, you and Pablo, and you shall see all the beauties of the fields, the mines, the forest, and the river."

Florentina turned a friendly glance on the unhappy creature, who, at her side, seemed made by Nature for the express purpose of serving as a foil for her perfect beauty.

Arriving at the house, the table was awaiting them, with the chocolate still boiling in the *jícaras*, and a small mountain of slices of bread.

The butter was laid upon leaves, and there were also pasties and delicacies. The glasses of fresh, clear water reproduced in their convex crystal these gastronomic dainties.

"Come, let us eat," said Don Francisco, seating himself.

"Nela," said Pablo, "you must take chocolate also."

He had scarcely said this, when Florentina offered to Nela a cup of chocolate, together with some of the dainties from the table. Nela hesitated to accept; but the Señorita de Penáguilas insisted with such kindness and graciousness, that she could not refuse. Don Manuel looked angrily at his daughter, as if he were not completely satisfied with her progress in etiquette; because, according to his standard, one of its distinguishing characteristics consisted in a fine appreciation of the distinct grades of urbanity with which different persons should be treated, according to their positions, each receiving no more and no less than according to social usage belonged to him.

As soon as he had drunk his chocolate, Don Francisco said, —

"Go now, all of you young folks. My son, this is the last day that Don Teodoro permits you to go out of the house. You three can take a walk while my brother and I look at the cattle."

They did not require much urging. Invited by the beauty of the day, they set out for the fields.

XV.

THE THREE.

THE señorita of the people was very happy in the midst of the smiling meadows, free from the vexatious trammel of her father's social ordinances. As soon as she was out of sight of the house, she began to scamper about joyfully and to swing herself from the branches of the trees. She touched the wild mulberries, and when she found them ripe, picked three, one for each mouth.

"This for you, cousin," she said, putting it in his mouth, "and this for you, Nela. I will leave the smallest for myself."

She picked flowers and adorned all the buttonholes of her cousin's coat, Nela's hair, and her own locks.

"It will please my cousin to see the mines, Nela," said Pablo. "Don't you think we had better go down?"

"Yes, let us go. This way, señorita."

"But do not take me through any tunnels, because I am afraid of them," said Florentina, following Pablo and his little guide. "Cousin, do you and Nela often walk through these places? This is beautiful. I could live here all my life. Blessed be the man who is going to give you the ability to see all these beauties!"

"God grant it! They seem much more lovely to me, who have never seen them, than to you, who are sated with seeing. Do not think, Florentina, that I do not comprehend the beautiful. I feel it in such a way that I almost replace the lack of sight with thought."

"That is wonderful; but in spite of what you say, you will meet some great disappointments, when you open your eyes."

"It may be," said Pablo, who was very laconic that morning.

Nela was not laconic, but dumb.

When they reached the cavity of La Terrible, Florentina admired the surprising spectacle presented by the rocks from which the mineral had been taken. She compared them to great piles

of rolls stuck together by sugar; after looking at them a second time, she compared them to a great sculpture of dogs and cats that had been turned to stone at the critical moment of a bloody battle.

"Let us sit on this slope," she said, "and see the trains of mineral pass; then, too, we shall see these curious rocks. That great stone in the middle has a large mouth. Do you see it, Nela? It seems to be looking and laughing at us, for it has eyes, too. Over there is one with a hump, another smoking a pipe, and two that are pulling hair, and one that is yawning, and another one like a monkey asleep, and another one that begins in a guitar and ends in the head of a dog, with a coffee-pot for a night-cap."

"All that you say, cousin," remarked Pablo, "proves to me that many incongruities are seen with the eyes, which shows that that precious organ of sight serves sometimes to present things disfigured, changing objects from their natural form into one artificial and false, since before you there are neither comfits nor cats, neither monkeys nor coffee-pots, but simply chalky rocks and

masses of calcareous earth streaked with oxide of iron. Out of the simplest things your eyes make an egg-plant field."

"You are right, cousin. For that reason I say that it is our imagination that sees, and not our eyes. Nevertheless, they serve to acquaint us with some little things which the poor have not and which we can give them."

As she said this, she touched Nela's dress.

"Why has not this blessed Nela a better dress?" added the Señorita de Penáguilas. "I have a great many, and I am going to give her one of them, and another one, besides, which shall be new."

Abashed and confused, Nela did not lift her eyes.

"It is a thing I cannot comprehend, that some have so much and others so little. I am vexed with papa when I hear him talk against those who think that everything should be divided equally in the world. What do they call them, Pablo?"

"They are the Socialists, the Communists," said Pablo, smiling.

"Then they are my people. Why should this

poor orphan go barefoot and not I? I know Nela is very good. You told me so last night, and your father has also told me. She has no family and no one to look after her. Why is so much unhappiness permitted? The bread is bitter in my mouth when I think how many there are who have none. Mariquita! So good and so alone! It may be that until now nobody has loved her, nobody has given her a kiss, nobody has spoken affectionately to her. It breaks my heart to think of it."

Nela was petrified with wonder, as in the first instant in which she beheld the apparition. Then she had seen the Holy Virgin; now she heard her.

"Nela," added Florentina, "and you, Pablo, listen. I wish to care for Nela, not as we should care for an outcast whom we might meet in the road, but as we should care for a brother, whom we might find living from hand to mouth. Do you not say that she has been your best companion, your guide in the darkness? Do you not say that you see with her eyes and walk with her steps? Now Nela belongs to me. I understand what

to do with her. I will agree to dress her, to give her all a person needs, and I will teach her a thousand things which will make her useful in a house. My father says that I may, perhaps, have to live here always. If it is so, Nela will live with me. With me, she will learn to read, to pray, to sew, to cook, as well as I can. What do you think! Then will not Nela be a señorita? My father will not oppose me in this. Besides, last night he said to me, 'Florentinilla, perhaps, perhaps, in a short time you will obey another.' Be that as God wishes, I shall take Nela for my friend. Will you love me much? As you have lived so forsaken, as you have lived like the flowers in the field, perhaps you do not even know how to be grateful. But I must teach you that. I must teach you so many things."

Marianela, who, while listening to such noble words, had been with difficulty resisting the impulse to cry, at length could not restrain herself, and after sobbing a minute, burst into tears. Pablo, profoundly moved, quieted her.

"Florentina," he said, "you do not talk like the majority of people. Your kindness is very

great, and your enthusiasm is like that which has filled the earth with martyrs, and peopled heaven with saints."

"What exaggeration!" said Florentina, laughing.

Soon after this, the señorita rose to pick a flower which had attracted her eye, at a distance.

"Has she gone?" asked Pablo.

"Yes," said Nela, drying her tears.

"Do you know, Nela, I fancy that my cousin is rather pretty. When she came last night, I felt the greatest antipathy toward her. You cannot imagine how she repelled me. Now I fancy that she must be pretty."

Nela began crying again.

"She is like the angels," she exclaimed with a flood of tears. "She looks as if she had just come down from Heaven. Her body and her soul are like the Virgin Mary."

"Oh, do not exaggerate," said Pablo, disturbed. "She cannot be so beautiful as you say. Do you think that I, blind as I am, do not comprehend where beauty is, and where it is not?"

"No, no, no; you do not comprehend it. How mistaken you are!"

"Yes, yes; she cannot be so beautiful," said Pablo, growing pale and evincing the keenest anguish. "Nela, friend of my heart, do you not know what my father said to me last night? He said that if I recover my sight he wishes me to marry Florentina."

Nela did not answer. Her tears flowed unceasingly, slipping down her tanned face and dropping on her hands. But not even through her bitter weeping could the magnitude of her grief be known. She alone knew that it was infinite.

"I know why you cry so," said Pablo, pressing his companion's hands. "My father will not insist on what is against my will. For me, there is no woman but you in the world. When my eyes see, if they do see, there will be for them no other beauty than your heavenly beauty. All the rest will be but shadows which cannot fix my attention. What is the human countenance, *Dios mio?* How is the soul portrayed in the face? If the light does not serve to show us a new side of our thought, for what does it serve? Are not that which is and that which is felt the same

thing? Are not the form and the idea like the heat and the fire? Can they be separated? Can you cease to be for me the most beautiful, the most beloved of all beings, when I am made master of the immense dominion of the visible?"

Florentina came back. They talked on, but said nothing worthy of repetition.

XVI.

THE PROMISE.

NOTHING happened in the days immediatel following; later, however, there came a da on which occurred a remarkable event. Teodor Golfin, that eminent artist, in whose hand the sur geon's knife seemed the chisel of genius, had undertaken the readjustment of one of Na delicate mechanisms.

Mute and awed were those of the famil witnessed the operation. When one awa resurrection of the dead or the creation of world, it cannot be otherwise. Golfin said n definite.

As he began the delicate operation of ban ing, he said, "Patience, it will be known time."

His leonine physiognomy expressed neither fear
triumph; he neither gave hope nor destroyed
Science had done all that it knew how to do.
The patient was kept in the strictest seclusion.
y his father waited upon him. No others of
family were allowed to see him.
ela went four or five times to ask for the
tient, but she did not cross the threshold; she
aited there till Don Manuel, his daughter, or
me other member of the household came out.
The señorita, after giving Nela detailed news
d picturing the anxiety of the family, used to
alk a little way with her. One day Florentina
ished Marianela to show her where she lived,
hey went together to the Centeno abode,
interior caused the señorita no little dis-
articularly when she saw the baskets which
as a bed for the little orphan.
la must soon come to live with me," said
tina, coming hastily out of that cavern;
then she will have a bed like mine, and
and eat as I do."
hese words were overheard by Señora Centeno,
well as by Mariuca and Pepina, and they at

once surmised that the abandoned orphan must have had for a father some king or prince, like the heroine of a romance.

When they were alone, Florentina said to Nela:

"Pray to God every night and day that he may grant sight to my dear cousin. In what great anxiety are we living! If this operation is successful, a thousand joys will come to us, and many wrongs will be righted. I have made a sacred promise to the Virgin, that if she gives sight to my cousin, I will adopt a poor person, the poorest I can find, giving her all that is necessary to make her forget her poverty, making her share equally with me all the comforts of life. For this, it is not sufficient to dress a person, nor to seat him before a well-spread table. It is necessary to offer him as well the alms which are worth more than all the broken bread, than all the warm clothing; and they are consideration, dignity, name. I will give these things to my poor one, whom I have chosen. You are my poor one, María. With all my soul, I have said to the Virgin, that if she gives sight to my cousin, I will take you for my sister. You will have the

same place in my home that I have; you will be my sister."

Saying this, Florentina placed her arm lovingly about Nela's shoulders and kissed her forehead.

It is impossible to describe Nela's feelings on hearing this. An instinctive dread had kept her from the house of Aldeacorba, — a dread with which was associated the image of Florentina, like the figures presented by a nightmare; at the same time she felt a great admiration and affection for her. Nela was candid enough to accept at once the impossibility of her hating her improvised sister. How could she hate one whom all the strength of her soul moved her to love?

In the Centeno household, they observed that Nela did not eat, that she was more languid than usual, that she remained silent and motionless for long periods, and that for some time she had not sung by night nor by day. She was absolutely incapable of doing anything; and when one day Tanasio sent her to the store for tobacco, she sat down by the roadside and remained there till nightfall.

One morning, a week after the operation, she went to the chief engineer's house, and Sofía said to her, "Have you not heard the good news? They have raised Pablo's bandage. They say that he sees a little. The foreman has just told me. Teodoro has not yet come, but Cárlos has gone there. We shall soon know if it is true."

Nela heard this, more dead than alive, and crossing her hands she exclaimed, —

"Blessed be the Holy Virgin who has done this! She, she alone, has done it."

"Are you glad? I can well believe it, for now Señorita Florentina will keep her promise," said Sofía, mockingly. "A thousand congratulations to you, Señora Doña Nela. There, you see, when we least expect it, God remembers the poor. It is like a lottery. What a rich prize, Nelilla! And can it be that you do not appreciate it? No, it cannot be that. I have never known a poor person who had any gratitude. They are proud, and the more you give them the more they want. It is a settled fact now that Pablo will marry his cousin. It is a good match; they are both handsome. She does not seem like a fool, and she has a

charming face. What a pity that with such a face and figure, she should be so dowdily dressed! No, if I need dressing, I can dress myself; they need not send me to the modiste of Santa Irene de Campó."

She was saying this when Cárlos entered. His face shone with joy.

"A complete triumph!" he called from the door. "Next to God, my brother Teodoro!"

"Is it certain?"

"As the daylight. I did not believe it. But what a triumph, Sofía! There is no greater joy for me than being the brother of my brother. Yes, it is as I say, — next to God, Teodoro!"

XVII.

THE FUGITIVE.

THE glad news ran through all Socartes. Nothing else was talked of throughout the village and the mines.

Nela dared not go to the house of Aldeacorba. A powerful secret force kept her away. She wandered all day through the outskirts of the mines, contemplating from afar the house of Penáguilas, which appeared to her to be transformed. In her soul there was joined to a great joy a something akin to self-shame, and to the exaltation of a noble passion, the insupportable anxiety of the most susceptible self-love.

She found a truce to the painful battles of her soul in the solitude which had contributed so much to the formation of her character. The clouds of the sky and the flowers of the earth pro-

duced on her spirit an effect equal to that produced on others by the pomp of altars, the eloquence of Christian orators, and the reading of subtle and mystical conceptions. In the solitude of the fields she said and thought a thousand things, without suspecting that they were prayers. Looking at Aldeacorba, she said, "I will not go there any more. All is ended for me. Of what use am I now?"

In spite of her ignorance, she could see that the emotion raging in her soul made it impossible for her to hate any one. On the contrary, she felt she must love all, friend and enemy; and as thistles were changed into flowers beneath the miraculous touch of a Christian martyr, so Nela saw her jealousy changed to admiration and gratitude. Her self-depreciation prompted her to eliminate herself from all that could happen in the future in Aldeacorba.

Had Nela been able to express her thoughts, she might have said, "My dignity will not permit me to accept the rebuff which I am about to receive. It may be that God wishes me to suffer this humiliation. It may be, but I need not assist

at my own dethronement. God bless her who by a natural law is to occupy my place; but I have not myself the courage to seat her in it."

Not being able to express herself so, she put the same idea into her own words, —

"I shall not go to Aldeacorba again, I will not let him see me. I will flee with Celipín or else go to my mother. I am of no use."

But, even while saying this, it seemed to her a sad thing to renounce the divine protection of that celestial Virgin who had appeared to her in the darkest moment of her life, and had extended her mantle to shield her; to see realized that which she had so often seen in dreams, palpitating with joy, and to be obliged to reject it; to hear herself called by a kindly voice that offered her a sisterly love, good living, consideration, name; to be unable to respond to that call with joy, with hope, with gratitude; to repulse that hand, which wished to draw her from the depths of degradation and misery and to lift her to the plane of the most respected and loved beings.

"No, no!" she cried, her fingers clutching her throat, "I cannot, I cannot! For nothing in the

world will I show myself in Aldeacorba. Holy Virgin, help me! My mother, take me!"

At nightfall she went home. On the road she met Celipín with a stick in his hand and his cap on the end of it.

"Nelilla," the boy said to her, "is n't this the way Don Teodoro carried his cap? Just now I was passing the pond at Hinojales and I looked at myself in the water. *Corcholis!* I was astonished because I saw myself with the same figure as Don Teodoro. Some day we are going to be doctors and wise men. I have what money I want now. You will see that nobody laughs at Celipín."

Three days more Nela spent wandering through the environs of the mines, following the course of the river or penetrating the forest of Saldeoro. The nights she passed in her baskets, without sleeping.

One night she said timidly, —

"When, Celipín?"

And Celipín answered with the gravity of a traveller, "To-morrow."

The two adventurers arose at dawn and went their several ways, — Celipín to his work and Nela

to carry a message which Señora Centeno had given her for the engineer's maid-servant. On her return she found Florentina awaiting her in the house.

María paused on the threshold, surprised and tremulous, because she divined instinctively the object of that visit.

"Nela, dear sister," said Florentina, affectionately, "what conduct is this? Why have you not appeared in Aldeacorba in all these days? Come, Pablo wishes to see you. Do you know that he can now say, 'I wish to see such a thing'? Do you know that my cousin is no longer blind?"

"I know it already," said Nela, taking the hand which the señorita offered and covering it with kisses.

"Let us go then. Let us go this moment. He does nothing but ask for Nela. To-day you must be there when Don Teodoro raises the bandage. It is the fourth time. The first time — ah, what a day! When we comprehended that my cousin could indeed see, we almost died of joy. The first face he saw was mine. Come, let us go!"

Nela loosed Florentina's hand.

"Have you forgotten my sacred promise," she added, "or do you think it was a jest? Ah, everything seems to me too small to show the Virgin the great favor she has done us. I wish in these days that nobody shall be sad in all the universe. I wish to show my joy. I wish to scatter it on all sides, as the farmers scatter the grain when they sow. I wish I could enter all the unhappy homes and say, 'Now your sorrows are ended; here I bring you the cure for them all.' That is not possible. Only God can do that. As my power does not equal my will, let us do well the little we can do, — and words are feeble, Nela. Now take leave of this hovel; say good-by to everything."

Nela said good-by to nothing, and as none of the sympathetic inhabitants were in the house at that time it was not necessary to delay for them. Florentina went out, holding Nela by the hand, and Nela, feeling incapable of resistance, allowed herself to be led. She felt that a supernatural power controlled her.

That day they took the road by Hinojales,

which was the one where Nela saw Florentina for the first time. At the entrance to the lane the señorita said to Nela, —

"Why have you not gone to the house? My uncle said that your modesty and delicacy kept you from coming to claim what, by God's mercy, you have gained. My uncle was right. Do you see? I still have red eyes from crying so much. Last night my uncle, my father, and I did not sleep. We were making plans and building castles in the air all night. Why are you so still? Why do you say nothing? Are you not glad as well as I?"

Nela looked at the señorita, opposing a weak resistance to the sweet hand that led her.

"Come on! What is it? You look at me so strangely, Nela."

It was true. The outcast's eyes, wandering from one object to another, had a gleam of fear when fixed on Florentina.

"Why does your hand tremble?" the señorita asked her. "Are you ill? You have grown paler than death, and your teeth chatter. If you are ill, I will cure you, I myself. After to-day you will have some one who is interested in you,

some one to pet and caress you. It is not I alone, since Pablo, too, loves you — he has told me so. He and I will love you dearly, because he and I are to be one. He wishes to see you. You can imagine his curiosity, — he who has never seen! From the first instant he could distinguish ugly things from beautiful ones. A bit of red lacquer seemed beautiful to him, while a piece of coal appeared horrible. He admired the beauty of the sky, and shrank with repugnance from a frog. All that is beautiful makes him so enthusiastic that he is almost delirious; all that is ugly causes him horror and makes him tremble, as if frightened. I could not have appeared so bad to him, because when he saw me he exclaimed, 'Oh, my cousin, how beautiful you are! Thank God, who has given me the light with which I now see you!'"

Nela tugged at Florentina's hand, and after loosing it, dropped to the ground as if lifeless. The señorita knelt beside her, and with caressing voice said,—

"What ails you? Why do you look at me so?"

The orphan fastened her eyes on Florentina's face with terrible earnestness, but without any expression of dislike, only with a look of supplicating anxiety, like the last glance of the dying, who with their eyes ask mercy of the image of God, believing it is God himself.

"Señorita, I do not dislike you; on the contrary, I love you dearly. I adore you," murmured Nela.

Saying this, she lifted the hem of Florentina's dress to her dry lips and kissed it passionately.

"Who could believe that you dislike me?" asked the señorita. "I know that you love me. But you frighten me. Get up."

"I love you dearly; I adore you," repeated Nela, kissing the señorita's feet; "but I cannot, no, I cannot!"

"What is it you cannot do? Raise yourself, I beg you."

Florentina extended her arms to lift her; but Nela sprang up, and standing at some distance, exclaimed, bathed in tears,—

"I cannot, *señorita mia*, I cannot!"

"What! What is it that moves you so?"

"I cannot go there."

"Why not?"

"The Holy Virgin knows," replied Nela, earnestly. "May the Holy Virgin bless you!"

Making a cross with her fingers, she kissed it. Florentina moved a step toward her. María, comprehending the movement of affection, ran swiftly toward the señorita, and leaning her head on her breast, said between sobs, —

"*Por Dios!* Kiss me!"

Florentina embraced her tenderly. Then stepping back with a quick movement, Nela darted into a neighboring thicket. The shrubs seemed to part to give her passage.

"Nela, my sister," called Florentina, in anguish.

"*Adios*, my heart's dearest," said Nela, looking at her for the last time.

She disappeared between the bushes. Florentina heard the snapping of the twigs, listening to it as the hunter listens to the step of the deer which escapes him. She was mute, paralyzed, sorrowful. She could not comprehend this most strange occurrence, nor could her great kindness, which frequently clouded her judgment, explain it.

Some time later, when Teodoro Golfin happened to pass by, on his way from Aldeacorba, he found Florentina standing in the same place, her head dropped on her breast, her cheeks burning, and her beautiful eyes wet with tears. Great was the doctor's astonishment at finding her alone and with that look of pain and woe, which, far from marring her beauty, increased it.

"What ails the child?" he asked with keen interest. "What has happened, Florentina?"

"A terrible thing, Don Teodoro," she replied, drying her tears. "How many wrong things there are in the world!"

"What are these wrong things? What can you know of them?"

"There are wicked things; but among them all is one that is the most wicked of all."

"What is that?"

"Ingratitude, Señor Golfin."

Looking toward the shrubs, she said, "She escaped here."

Ascending a knoll in order to see as far as possible, she added, —

"I do not see her anywhere."

"Nor I," exclaimed the doctor, smiling. "Don Manuel says you are devoted to the chasing of butterflies. Really, the rogues are very ungrateful not to allow themselves to be caught by you."

"It is not that. I will tell you, if you are going toward Aldeacorba."

"I am not going, but coming, fair lady; but since you will tell me something, whatever it may be, I will turn back with much pleasure. Let us go back to Aldeacorba. Now I am all ears."

XVIII.

NELA DECIDES TO LEAVE.

NELA wandered alone all day and through the night about the house of Aldeacorba, approaching as near as she could without danger of being discovered. When she heard the sound of steps, she fled suddenly, like a thief. She went down into the depths of La Terrible; the awful aspect of the crater seemed grateful to her on that day. After rambling about through the bottom, she climbed up the hill that she might see the lights of Aldeacorba. There they were, shining through the darkness of the night. After gazing at them as if she had never before in her life seen lights, she turned toward La Trascava. Before reaching the place, she heard steps, stopped, and soon saw Celipín, coming with resolute stride along the path. He carried a small bundle hanging

from a stick, and his walk and manner showed a firm resolution not to stop until he had measured with his legs all the width of the earth.

"Celipín, where are you going?" Nela asked, stopping him.

"Nela! You out here! We thought you were at Señorita Florentina's house, eating chickens and partridges at all hours, and drinking lemonade."

"What are you doing here?"

"Now, let's stop that! Why do you ask me, when you know already?" replied the lad, picking up his stick and bundle. "You know very well that I am going away to learn and to make money. Didn't I tell you that it was to-night? Well, here I am, happier than any king, though rather sorry when I think that my mother and father are going to cry. Do you see, Nela, the Virgin has helped me to-night, because Father and Mother began to snore sooner than usual; and as I had my bundle already made up, I went up to the little window and jumped out. Are you coming or not?"

"Yes, I am going too," said Nela, grasping the intrepid voyager's arm.

"We will take the train and go as far in it as we can," said Celipín, with enthusiasm, "and we will beg alms until we reach the *Madriles* of the King of Spain; and when we get there, you can go out to service in the house of a marquis or a count, and I in another place, and so while I study you can learn many fine things. *Corcholis!* of all that I learn, I mean to teach you a little, — a little, no more, because women do not need so much knowledge as we doctors."

Before Celipín had finished speaking, the two had begun walking as fast as if they already saw the towers of the *Madriles* of the King of Spain.

"Let us go out of the path," said Celipín, "because if they see us, they will catch us and give us a good caning."

But Nela loosed her companion's hand, and seating herself on a stone, murmured sadly, —

"I am not going."

"Nela! What a fool you are! You have not, like me, a heart the size of one of those rocks in La Terrible," said Celipín, boastfully. "Why are you afraid? Why don't you come?"

"I — what for?"

"Don't you know that Don Teodoro said that those brought up here turn to stone. I do not wish to be a stone, — not I!"

"Why should I go," said Nela, bitterly troubled. "For you there is time; for me it is too late."

Nela's head dropped on her breast, and for a long time she remained insensible to the seductive verbosity of the future Hippocrates. On seeing that she was about to pass the boundary of that land where she had lived, and where her mother slept the eternal sleep, she felt as if she were being torn from her native soil. The beauty of the country, with whose defects she felt herself united by a sort of kinship; the scant happiness she had enjoyed in it; the remembrance of her young master, and the pleasant hours spent in walking with him were so many roots, whose violent wrenching caused her the keenest pain.

"I am not going," she repeated.

And Celipín talked, — talked as if he had already miraculously reached the pinnacle of his career.

"Then you will go back home?" he asked Nela.

"No."

"Are you going to Aldeacorba?"

"No."

"Then you are going to the village where the Señorita Florentina lives?"

"No, nor there either."

"Well, then! *Corcholis! Re-corcholis!* Where are you going?"

Nela answered nothing, but continued to look fixedly at the ground.

"Well, then, Nela," said Celipín, tired by his long arguments, "I am going to leave you, because I am afraid they will find me. Do you want me to give you a *peseta*, for fear you should need something to-night?"

"No, Celipín, I want nothing. Go. You will be a useful man. Behave well, and do not forget Socartes nor your parents."

The traveller felt something inappropriate to so resolute a man as he, — he felt a strong desire to cry. Smothering that importunate emotion, he said, —

"How could I forget Socartes? I shall not forget my parents, nor you, who have helped me to this. *Adios*, Nelilla; I hear steps."

Celipín hoisted his stick with a decision which showed how daring was his soul for meeting the dangers of the world; but his intrepidity was unnecessary, since it was only a dog that came.

"It is Choto," said Nela, trembling.

"*Adios*," murmured Celipín, setting out. He disappeared among the shadows of the night. Geology had lost a stone, and society had gained a man.

Nela shivered as Choto fawned upon her. The noble animal, after leaping about her, whining in such a way that his whines lacked little of being words, started swiftly toward Aldeacorba.

At the same hour, Teodoro Golfin came out of the house of Aldeacorba. Choto ran up to him and tumultuously told him we know not what. It was like a brusque summons. Golfin, who knew many tongues, was not strong in the canine, and did not understand! but Choto continued running about him. Teodoro paused, and watched the quadruped. Choto, seeing that he had made an impression on him, began to run in a direction contrary to that which Golfin was taking.

He followed, murmuring, "Well, let us go there!"

Choto returned running, and looked to see if he was followed; then he ran swiftly ahead. About a hundred metres from Aldeacorba, Golfin thought he heard a voice say, —

"Choto, what do you want?"

He at once suspected it was Nela who spoke. He stopped and listened, concealed by the shadow of a beech-tree, and soon saw a human figure rise from the stone wall and begin to walk rapidly. The shadows of the trees did not permit him to see clearly. Very softly he followed, at a distance, leaving the path and walking on the grass that he might not make a sound. He could see her perfectly when she entered the open field.

Nela advanced more rapidly. At last she ran. Golfin ran also. After a little of this arduous progress, Nela sat down on a stone. At her feet opened the cavern of La Trascava, dark and frightful in the obscurity of the night. Golfin, with a noiseless step, approached her. Choto was sitting in front of Nela, looking at her like

a sphinx. Nela's eyes were fixed on the chasm. Soon she began to descend rapidly, slipping rather than running. Like a lion, Teodoro balanced himself on the edge of the abyss, calling in a stentorian voice, —

"Nela! Nela!"

He looked, but saw nothing in the dark mouth. He heard the growls of Choto, as the dog ran about the edge of the chasm. Teodoro advanced a few steps cautiously. He called again, and a voice answered him from below, —

"Señor!"

"Come up this moment!"

He received no reply.

"I tell you to come up!"

Soon Nela's figure could be seen outlined in the lowest part of that horrible funnel. Choto, after scenting the abyss of La Trascava, came up. Nela came up also, but very slowly. She stopped and faintly said, "Señor!"

"I want you to come up. What are you doing there?"

Nela came up a little farther.

"Come up at once. I have something to tell you."

"Something?"

"Something, yes, something to tell you."

Nela came up; but Teodoro did not feel that he had conquered until he had firmly grasped her hand.

XIX.

DOMESTICATION.

THE two walked on for a short time without speaking. Nela went unresistingly, and Teodoro accommodated his step to hers, like a man taking a child to school. In a place by the road, where there were three enormous rocks, Teodoro seated himself, and placing Nela in front of him, like one who is about to ask an account of grave misdeeds, he took both her hands and said seriously to her, —

"What were you going to do there?"

"I? Where?"

"Down there. You understand perfectly what I mean. Speak plainly, as you would to a confessor or to a father."

"I have no father," she said, with a slight accent of rebellion.

"That is true; but imagine I am your father, and answer. What were you going to do there?"

"My mother is there," she answered sullenly.

"Your mother is dead. Do you not know that those who are dead are in the other world, and nowhere else?"

"She is there," affirmed Nela, sadly, turning her eyes toward the abyss.

"And you intended to go to her, did you not? That is to say, you intended to die?"

"Yes, señor."

"And do you not know that your mother committed a great crime in killing herself, and that in imitating her you would commit another equal to it? Has no one taught you that?"

"I do not remember that anybody has said anything about it to me. If I wish to kill myself who can stop me?"

"Only you yourself. Do you not understand that it cannot please God that we should kill ourselves? Poor creature, abandoned to your natural feelings, without instruction, without religion, without any kindly and disinterested influence to guide you! What ideas you have of

death, and of the future life, and of God! Where did you get the idea that your mother is there? Do you call a heap of lifeless bones your mother? Do you think that she remains in that cavern, living, thinking, loving you? Has nobody told you that the soul which leaves the body never returns to it? Do you not know that tombs, in whatever form they may be, contain nothing but dust and decomposition? How do you picture God,—like a stern man who sits up there with crossed arms, willing that we should play with our lives, and that in his place we should put spirits, phantoms, which we ourselves make? Has not your master who is so wise told you these things? Tell me, you foolish child, what good do you expect to attain by throwing yourself into this hole? Do you think you will be happier?"

"Yes, señor."

"How?"

"By not feeling anything of what I feel now, and by being with my mother."

"I see that you are more foolish than I thought," said Golfin, smiling. "Now, you are going to be frank with me. Do you wish me ill?"

"No, señor, I wish ill to nobody, and least of all to you, who have been so good to me, and have given sight to my master?"

"Well, but that is not enough. I want you not only to love me, but to have confidence in me, and to tell me all your little troubles. Very strange things are happening to you, little one, and you are going to tell me all, — all. You will see how it comforts you; you will see what a good confessor I am."

Nela smiled sadly. Then she dropped her head and fell on her knees.

"No, child, that is wrong. Sit beside me. Come here," said Golfin, affectionately, seating her beside himself. "I imagine that you are longing to find some one to whom you can tell your secrets; is n't it so? And you find nobody. Certainly you are alone enough in the world. Now, Nela, tell me, first of all, why — give good attention — why you intended to kill yourself."

Nela did not answer.

"I saw you joyous and apparently satisfied with life a few days ago. Why have you changed so in a night?"

"I want to go to my mother," answered Nela, after a moment's hesitation. "I do not wish to live any longer. I am of no use. Is it not better that I should die? If God does not wish me to die, I shall kill myself, I myself, by my own will."

"That idea that you are not of any use is the cause of much unhappiness for you, poor child. Cursed be the one — or rather, the ones, for there are many — who have inculcated it! All are equally responsible for the neglect, the solitude, and the ignorance in which you have lived. Who is there that is useless? God knows what you might have been in other hands! Yours is a very delicate little body, very delicate, but perhaps of great worth; but place a harp in rough hands, and what will they do with it? Break it. Because your weak constitution will not permit you to break stone like Mariuca and Pepina, must you insist that you are of no use? Are we born simply to work like animals? Have you not intelligence, sensibility, and a thousand precious gifts that nobody has known how to cultivate? No, you would be very useful, if you should

find a capable hand that knew how to guide you."

Nela, profoundly impressed by these words, which she understood by intuition, fixed her eyes on Teodoro's expressive and intelligent face. Surprise and gratitude filled her heart.

"But in you there is not one mystery only," added Golfin. "A most fortunate chance has come to you to leave these wretched surroundings, and you have refused it. Florentina, who is one of God's angels, has wished to make a friend and sister of you. I do not know of another example of kindness like hers. And what have you done? Fled from her like a savage. Is that ingratitude, or some other feeling that we cannot understand?"

"No, no, no!" replied Nela, sorrowfully. "I am not ungrateful. I adore Señorita Florentina. It seems to me that she is not of flesh and blood like us, and that I do not deserve even to look at her."

"Well, child, that may be; but your conduct does not show anything but ingratitude, — great ingratitude."

"No, I am not ungrateful," said Nela, drowned in tears. "I feared it; yes, I thought they would believe me ungrateful, and that was the only thing that made me regret to kill myself. But I am so ignorant that I did not know how to beg the señorita's pardon for running from her, nor how to explain anything."

"I will make your peace with the señorita. If you do not wish to see her again, I will undertake to tell her, and to prove to her that you are not ungrateful. Now, show me your heart, and tell me all you feel, and the cause of your desperation. However great may be a creature's solitude and misery, life is not destroyed save when there is a very powerful motive for hating it."

"Yes, señor, I think so too."

"And you hate life?"

Nela was silent for a moment. Crossing her arms, she said vehemently, —

"No, señor, I do not hate it, but I desire it."

"You were going to a good place to seek it!"

"I believe that after a person is dead, he has all that he lacks here. If not, why is death calling to us at all hours? I have dreams, and in

them I see happiness and content for all who have died."

"Do you believe in what you dream?"

"Yes, señor; I see the trees and rocks which I have been used to seeing since I was born, and in their faces —"

"Halloo! halloo! Have trees and rocks faces also?"

"Yes, señor, for me all beautiful things see and speak. For that reason, when all these things have said to me, 'Come with us; kill yourself, and you will live without pain' —"

"What a sad fancy!" thought Golfin; "a soul entirely pagan!"

Soon he added aloud, —

"If you desire to live, why do you not accept what Florentina offers you?"

"Because — because — because Señorita Florentina offers me nothing but death," said Nela, with vehemence.

"How wrongly you judge her charity! You have been accustomed all your life to direct contact and communion with Nature, and you prefer this wide liberty to the sweet affections

of a family. Have you been so happy in this life?"

"I was beginning to be —"

"And when did you cease to be?"

After a long pause, Nela answered, —

"When you came."

"I? What evil have I brought you?"

"None. You have brought nothing but great good."

"I have restored your master's sight," said Golfin, observing Nela's face carefully. "Do you not feel grateful to me for that?"

"Yes, señor, deeply grateful," she replied, looking at the doctor with her eyes filled with tears.

Golfin, without ceasing to observe her or losing the lightest expression which might serve to show to him the feelings of this child-woman, said, —

"Your master has told me that he loves you. While he was blind as well as after he could see, he has done nothing but ask for Nela. For him all the universe contains but one person, — Nela. The light which he is permitted to enjoy serves for nothing, unless it serves to let him see Nela."

"To see Nela! Well, he will not see her? Nela will not let herself be seen," she exclaimed with vigor. "Why? Because she is very ugly. He could love the daughter of La Canela while his eyes were closed; but when they are opened, and he sees Señorita Florentina, he cannot love the poor, dwarfed Nela."

"Who knows —"

"It cannot be! It cannot be!" affirmed the girl, with the greatest energy.

"That is a whim of yours. You cannot tell whether or no you would please your master, when you have not tried it. I will take you to the house."

"I do not wish it. I do not wish it," she cried, springing up and standing in front of Teodoro.

"Calm yourself. Come here," he said kindly to her. "Let us talk. It is true that you are not very beautiful, but it is not fitting for a young girl to appreciate exterior beauty so keenly. You have an excessive self-love, little woman!"

Without noticing Golfin's remarks Nela continued, —

"There ought not to be any ugly things. No ugly thing ought to live."

"But, see here, my daughter, if all ugly persons were forced to get out of our way, how depopulated the world would be! Poor, unhappy, foolish child! That idea of yours is not a new one. People had it centuries ago, — people of imagination like you, who lived near to Nature like you, and who, like you, lacked a certain light, which you lack through ignorance and neglect, and which they lacked because that light had not yet come to the world. You must cure yourself of this notion. You must remember that there are gifts of greater value than beauty, — gifts of the soul, which are neither spoiled by time nor subject to the caprice of the eyes. Seek them in your soul and you will find them. However often you may look for your beauty in the glass, you will never find it. Seek those lovely gifts, cultivate them; and when you see them well-grown and blossoming, you will have no fear. This anxiety which you feel will be calmed. Then you will easily raise yourself from the humble position in which you now are; then you will have a beauty which,

perhaps, the eyes will not admire, but which will be a joy and delight to you."

These sensible words were neither understood nor accepted by Nela, who, crouching beside Golfin, was looking most attentively at him. Her eloquent eyes seemed to say, "But to what do all these sophisms come, señor pedant?"

"Here," continued Golfin, enjoying this affair extremely, and using, unconsciously, the tone of a psychological thesis, "there is one principal question, and that is —"

Nela had divined it, and covered her face with her hands.

"There is nothing strange in what has befallen you; on the contrary, it is very natural. You have a sentimental temperament and imagination. You have led, with your master, the free and poetic life of nature, always together in innocent intimacy. He is kind, and as beautiful as a statue. His blind beauty seems made for the enjoyment of those who see. Moreover, his gentleness and the greatness of his heart captivate and charm all. It is not strange that he should have captivated you, a girl almost a woman, or a woman who ap-

pears a girl. Do you love him very much, — love him more than all else in the world?"

"Yes, yes, señor," she answered sobbing.

"You cannot bear the idea that he should cease to love you?"

"No, oh, no, señor."

"Has he said words of love to you and made promises to you?"

"Oh, yes, yes, señor; he told me that I should be his companion all through life, and I believed him."

"Why should it not be so?"

"He told me he could not live without me, and that even if he should see, he would always love me dearly. I was content; and my smallness and my ridiculous appearance did not trouble me, because he could not see me, and there in his darkness he believed me beautiful. But after —"

"After —" murmured Golfin, overcome by compassion. "I see now that it is all my fault."

"Your fault? No, because you have done a good work. It is a good thing that he should have the use of his eyes. I say to myself that it

is a good thing. But after this I ought to go away — at once — because he will see Señorita Florentina and will compare her with me; and Señorita Florentina is like the angels, and I — to compare me with her is like comparing a piece of a broken mirror with the sun. What am I good for? I should never have been born. Why was I born? God was mistaken. He gave me an ugly face, a tiny body, and a very large heart. Of what use is this large heart to me? For torment, nothing more. Ah, if I did not subdue it, it would persist in hating. But hating does not please me. I do not know how to hate, and before I learn what it is, I wish to bury my heart, that it may torment me no more."

"It torments you with jealousy, with a feeling of humiliation? Tell me, what feelings are awakened in you by Florentina's protection?"

"Fear! shame!" exclaimed Nela, affrightedly opening her eyes. "To live with them! To see them every hour — for my heart tells me that they will marry!"

"But Florentina is very good. She would love you dearly."

"I love her very much also; but not in Aldeacorba," said the daughter of La Canela. "She has come to take from me that which is mine, — because he *was* mine, señor. Florentina is like the Virgin Mary. I will pray to her, but I do not wish her to take from me that which is mine. But I shall lose it — I have already lost it. Where am I going now? What am I? What am I worth? I have lost all, and I want to go to my mother."

Nela took a few steps, but Golfin held her firmly by the wrist. As he did so, he noticed her feverish pulse.

"Come here," he said. "From this moment, whether you wish it or not, you belong to me, — you are mine, and must do nothing but what I command. Come here; you must not separate yourself from me. I am going to try a new system of education on you. We shall see whether I know how to cut this beautiful diamond. You will learn to put your ugliness at the feet of beauty; to contemplate with serenity the triumphs of others; to load with chains that great heart of yours, subduing it completely, that it may never

again feel envy or despair; that it may love all equally, placing above all others those who have injured you. You will learn everything; you will be another being; you will cease to be Nela. I promise you that you will be a señorita, a true woman."

It cannot be affirmed that Nela understood all that Golfin was saying with such vehemence and vigor that he forgot for the moment the person with whom he was talking; but the orphan felt a strange fascination. Teodoro was rapidly acquiring that potent dominion over this girl which the superior intelligence always exercises over the inferior. Sad and silent, she leaned her head on Teodoro's shoulder.

"Let us go there," he said suddenly.

Nela trembled all over. Golfin noted the beads upon her forehead, the icy coldness of her hands, the violence of her pulse.

"Let us go, let us go! It is cold here."

He took Nela's hand. His influence over her was already so great, that the girl rose and went a few steps. Then she stopped, and fell on her knees.

"Oh, señor, do not take me!" she exclaimed, with fear.

She was pale, and showed a frightful physical change. Golfin took her by the arm. The weakened body could not lift itself from the ground. He lifted her in his arms and said, —

"Days ago, in this same place, I carried you on my shoulder, because you could not walk. To-night it will be the same."

Her hot breath burned his face as he carried her. She was drooping and fading like a plant that has been plucked up, leaving its roots in the ground.

Reaching the house of Aldeacorba, Golfin felt his burden made lighter. Nela lifted her hands with a gesture of despair, but was silent.

He entered. All was still. A servant came to receive him, and, at Teodoro's request, conducted him noiselessly to Florentina's room. He found her alone on her knees, on the floor, and leaning her arms on the seat of a chair, in an attitude of devout, silent prayer. She was alarmed at seeing a man enter her rooms at such an hour; but astonishment succeeded the fleeting alarm when she

saw the burden which Golfin carried on his robust shoulders.

Surprise did not permit Florentina to speak when Teodoro, carefully depositing his burden on a sofa, said,—

"Here I bring her. Am I not a successful chaser of butterflies?"

XX.

THE NEW WORLD.

LET us go back a few days. When Teodoro lifted Pablo Penáguilas's bandage for the first time, the youth gave a cry of fear. All his movements were backward. He extended his hands, as if to save himself from falling. The illumined space was, for him, an immense abyss into which he supposed himself about to fall. The instinct of self-preservation made him close his eyes. Urged by Teodoro, by his father, and by the others in the house, all of whom felt the deepest anxiety, he looked again; but the fear was undiminished. The distant mountains seemed to him but an arm's length away, and the objects and persons which surrounded him appeared to him as if about to fall upon his eyes. Pablo experienced

a delirious joy. His nerves and his imagination were so greatly excited that Teodoro judged it prudent to rest. Smiling, he said to him,—

"You have seen enough for one day. One does not pass from blindness to light as one enters the theatre. It is a birth in which there is much pain."

Later, the patient showed such a strong desire to exercise the precious new faculty that Teodoro consented to open to him a chink of the new world.

"My mind is flooded with beauty, — a beauty that I did not know before," said Pablo, explaining his first impression. "What was it that frightened me? The idea of size, which I had conceived only in a crude and imperfect way, was presented to me in a clear and terrible manner. All this is beautiful and grand, although it makes me tremble. I saw the entire universe running toward me, and I was frightened. The sky was a great, expectant vacuum — I do not express it well; it had the aspect of a thing extraordinarily gifted with expression. All that expanse of sky and mountains was looking at me and running toward me; but

all was cold and severe in its grand majesty. Show me something delicate and lovely. Nela, where is Nela?"

As he said this, Golfin again uncovered his eyes, aiding them by skilfully-adjusted glasses.

"Oh, *Dios mio!* This which I see is Nela!" exclaimed Pablo, with enthusiastic admiration.

"It is your cousin Florentina."

"Ah," exclaimed Pablo, full of confusion, "I had no idea of such beauty. Cousin mine, you are like delightful music; what I see appears the clearest expression of harmony. Where is Nela?"

"You will have time to see her," said Don Francisco, soothingly. "Calm yourself now."

"Florentina! Florentina!" repeated Pablo, wildly. "What have you in your face that suggest the idea of God incarnate? Are you in the middle of something, like a sun? From your face comes forth something like rays; in short, I have an idea, now, of what the angels are. And your body, your hands, your hair vibrate, giving me the most lovely ideas. What is that?"

"He is beginning to comprehend colors," said Golfin. "Perhaps he sees objects surrounded by

the colors of the spectrum. He does not yet perceive distances."

"I see you within my own eyes," said Pablo. "You are confused with all that I think, and your visible person is like a memory to me. A memory of what? I have never seen before. Have I lived before this life? I cannot tell; but I knew about your eyes. And you, Father, where are you? Ah, now I see you. You are — in you is suggested the love which I have for you. And my uncle — you look so much alike. And where is the blessed Golfin?"

"Here — in the presence of his patient," said Teodoro, presenting himself. "Here I am, uglier than Punch. As you have not yet seen either lions or Newfoundland dogs, you can have no idea of my beauty. They say I resemble those noble animals."

"You are all fair-looking," said Pablo, candidly, "but my cousin has an immense advantage over you all. And Nela? Why do they not bring Nela?"

They told him that his little guide had not appeared at the house, and that they had not had

time to seek her, which caused him the greatest pain. They succeeded in calming him; and as there was fear of an accession of fever, they put him to bed, urging him to sleep. On the following day his prostration was great, but his vigorous nature triumphed over all. Golfin began to teach him the distinction and combination of colors, but the youth's vigorous understanding tended to contrast ugliness and beauty. These two ideas were absolutely defined, without being in the least influenced either by the idea of utility, or even that of kindness. A wandering butterfly that entered his room seemed beautiful to him. An inkstand he thought horrible, spite of the fact that his uncle demonstrated, by ingenious arrangements, that it served to hold the ink for writing, — the ink for writing. Between an engraving of the Crucifixion and one of Galatea floating in a shell drawn by nymphs and Tritons, he chose the latter, which produced a bad effect on Florentina, who promised to teach him to place sacred things infinitely above the profane. Seeing the maids and other women of Aldeacorba, he evinced the keenest distaste because they were either homely or insignifi-

cant. In spite of that he desired to see. His curiosity was an intense fever that could in no way be calmed. Each day his disappointment at not seeing Nela was greater; but meantime, he was begging Florentina not to leave him for a moment.

On the third day Golfin said to him, —

"You have now seen a large part of the wonders of the visible world. Now you must see yourself."

They brought a mirror, and Pablo looked in it.

"Is that I?" he said with great admiration. "I can hardly believe it. Am I in that hard, quiet water? What a wonderful thing glass is! It does not seem possible that men could have made this atmosphere of stone. By my life, I am not so ugly, am I, cousin? When you look in this do you show forth as lovely as you are? It cannot be. Look into the transparent sky and you will see your image. You will believe that you are seeing the angels when you see yourself."

Alone with Florentina the first evening, and while she was lavishing upon him the care and attention which an invalid exacts, Pablo said to her, —

"Cousin mine, my father has read that passage of our history in which Christopher Columbus discovered the New World, never before seen by any man of Europe. That sailor opened the eyes of the known world to let it see another more beautiful. I cannot imagine him save as Teodoro Golfin, and Europe as a great blind giant, for whom America and its wonders were the light. I, also, have discovered a new world. You are my America. You are that beautiful island where the sailor first landed. He failed to see the continent with its immense forests and rivers. Perhaps I, also, shall fail to see the most beautiful — "

Then he fell into profound meditation, and at length asked her, —

"Where is Nela?"

"I do not know what has become of the poor girl," said Florentina. "Doubtless she does not wish to see you."

"She is shy and very modest," replied Pablo. "She fears to trouble those in the house. Florentina, I will tell you in confidence that I love her dearly. You will love her also. I ardently desire to see this good companion and friend."

"I myself will look for her to-morrow."

"Yes, yes; but do not be away long. When I do not see you I am very lonely. I am accustomed to seeing you, and these three days seem centuries of happiness. Do not rob me of a minute. Last night my father told me that after seeing you I ought not to have any curiosity to see other women."

"What nonsense!" said Florentina, blushing; "there are others much lovelier than I."

"No, no; all say there are not," vehemently affirmed Pablo, turning his bandaged face toward her, as if through all obstacles he yet wished to see her.

"They told me that before, and I did not wish to believe it; but since I have become conscious of the visible world and its surpassing beauty I believe it; yes, I believe it. You are a perfect type of beauty. There is nothing beyond, — there cannot be. Give me your hand."

He pressed Florentina's hand ardently between his own.

"I laugh at myself," he added, — "at my stupid insistence in appreciating, without sight, the aspect

of beauty. I believe that the surprise produced by reality will last all my life. Reality! He who does not possess it is an idiot. Florentina, I was an idiot."

"No, cousin, you always were and always will be very intelligent. But do not excite your imagination now. It will soon be time to go to sleep. Don Teodoro has ordered that you should have no conversation at this hour, because it makes you wakeful. If you are not quiet I shall go."

"Is it already night?"

"Yes, it is night now."

"Well, whether it be night or day, I wish to talk," declared Pablo, strongly excited, and tossing restlessly on the bed where he lay dressed. "On one condition I will be quiet, and that is that you will not leave my side, and that from time to time you will pat the bed that I may know you are here."

"Well, I will do that, and here is the proof of good faith," said Florentina, giving a pat to the bed.

"When you laugh, I seem to breathe a fresh and fragrant atmosphere, and all my senses work to

reproduce your image. The memory of your face exists within me in such a way that, though bandaged, I seem to see you just the same."

"Are you going to chatter again? I will call Don Teodoro," said Florentina.

"No, be quiet. If I should keep still, if I should smother all I think, all I hear, and all I see here within me, it would only torment me the more. And you want me to sleep! to sleep,— when I suffer and enjoy that which I cannot utter, because there are no words to speak it! I passed all last night talking with you and Nela. Poor Nela! I have a great curiosity to see her,— a very great curiosity."

"I will go and look for her to-morrow. Come! The conversation is ended. Hush, or I shall go."

"Stay! I will talk to myself. Now I am going to repeat the things I said to you last night, when we two were talking alone. I am going to recall what you were saying to me —"

"I?"

"That is to say, the things which I fancied I heard from your lips. Silence, Señorita de Penáguilas; I fancy myself alone with my imagination."

On the following day when Florentina presented herself before her cousin, she said to him, —

"I was bringing Mariquilla to you, and she fled from me. What ingratitude!"

"And you have not looked for her?"

"Where? She ran from me. This afternoon I will go out again and search till I find her."

"No, do not go out," said Pablo, earnestly. "She will appear. She will come alone."

"She seems crazy."

"Does she know that I can see?"

"I told her myself. But doubtless she has lost her reason. She says that I am the Holy Virgin, and kisses my dress."

"That is because you produce the same effect on her as on others. Nela is so good! Poor girl! We must protect her, Florentina, we must care for her. Does it not seem so to you?"

"She is an ingrate," said Florentina, sadly.

"Ah, do not believe that. Nela cannot be ungrateful. She is very good. I value her highly. They must search for her and bring her here to me."

"I will go."

"No, no, not you," said Pablo, suddenly, taking

his cousin's hand. "Your duty, unreasonable señorita, is to keep me company. If Señor Golfin does not come soon to lift my bandage, I shall lift it myself. I have not seen you since yesterday, and I cannot endure it, — no, I cannot endure it. Has Don Teodoro come?"

"He is below with your father and mine. He will soon come up. Have patience! You act like a little school-boy."

Pablo continued, —

"Light! Light! It is a sin to keep one so long in darkness; I cannot endure it. I shall die. I have not seen you since yesterday, cousin, and I am wild to see you. Thank God, who made you, charming woman! But if after God had created beauty, he had not created hearts, how foolish his work would have been! Light! Light!"

Teodoro came up and raised the bandage, and Pablo passed a tranquil day, speaking of different things. His remembrance of Nela appeared to recede, diminish, and disappear, as ships on a serene day are lost on the horizon; nor did he again refer to her till nightfall. Then, like one who recalls an old subject, Pablo said, —

"Has not Nela appeared?"

Florentina told him she had not, and the talk drifted to other subjects.

That night Pablo heard voices in the house at a late hour. He thought he distinguished the voices of Teodoro Golfin, Florentina, and his father. Then he slept. His sleep, which began sweet and tranquil, was afterward uneasy and disturbed, because in the deep refuge of his soul, as in a cavern newly-illuminated, the beauties and uglinesses of the plastic world contended, awaking passions, burying memories, and transforming his soul. On the following day, in accordance with Golfin's promise, they permitted him to rise and walk about the house.

XXI.

THE EYES KILL.

THE rooms allotted Florentina in Aldeacorba were the most cheerful in the house. Nobody had occupied them since the death of Señora de Penáguilas; but Don Francisco, deeming his niece worthy of lodging there, fitted up the rooms with a beauty and elegance which they had not known during his wife's life. The balcony on the south side opened on the orchard, so that the room was daily flooded with sweet odors and light, and made cheery by the musical twittering of birds.

One day it had rained throughout the morning. Later, it had cleared, and at last, above the damp, white atmosphere, appeared a majestic rainbow. One end of the great arch rested on the peaks of Ficóbriga, the other in the grove of Saldeoro.

Florentina was in the room, not stringing pearls, nor embroidering satin with threads of gold, but cutting a dress from a paper pattern. She was sitting on the floor, with her scissors in constant motion. At her side was a mountain of pieces of linen, percale, and other materials, which she had ordered brought in all haste that morning from Villamojada. Cutting here and cutting there, Florentina made sleeves and skirts and waists. They were not models of form, nor could one put much faith in the regularity of the patterns, which were also Florentina's work. But she, recognizing the defects, thought that in this art the good intention saved the result from total failure. Her excellent father had said to her that morning, as she commenced her work, —

"*Por Dios!* Florentinilla, it seems to me that there are already enough dressmakers in the world. I cannot tell you how it makes me feel to see a señorita of good position dragging herself over the floor, scissors in hand. It is not proper. It does not please me to have you work to dress yourself; do you think it pleases me to see you work for others? What are dressmakers for — what are dressmakers for, eh?"

"Any dressmaker would do it better than I," answered Florentina, smiling; "but then I should not be doing it, papa, and I want to do it myself."

After that Florentina was left alone, — no, not alone, for in the alcove beside the bed was an old-fashioned sofa, covered with blankets. At one end, among the pillows, appeared a head. The face was disfigured and bloodless. The sleeper was in a restless stupor broken incessantly by violent twitchings. She seemed quieter at noon, however, when Don Manuel, accompanied by Teodoro Golfin, entered the room.

Golfin went directly to the sofa, and, stooping, observed Nela's face carefully, and said, —

"It seems to me that her sleep is quieter now. Let us make no noise."

"What do you think of my daughter?" said Don Manuel, smiling. "Do you see the task she has set herself? Speak out, Don Teodoro, do not be afraid of offending me. Frankly, when there is no necessity for working, why should one work? It is all very well that my daughter should give all her pin-money to her fellow-creatures;

but this, this mania for occupying herself with common necessities — common necessities — "

"Let her alone," replied Golfin, looking approvingly at her. "Each one has his own special way of spending pin-money."

"I do not oppose it, and should not, even if her charities should amount to wastefulness and bankruptcy," said Manuel, walking pompously through the room, with his hands in his pockets. "But is there no better way of giving charity? She wishes to give thanks to God for my nephew's restoration. That is right, that is Christian; but let us see — let us see."

He stopped before Nela and looked at her.

"Would it not have been more reasonable," he added, "if instead of having this poor girl inconvenience us in the house, my little daughter had organized one of the useful charity-balls, which are in fashion at court, and in which the best feelings of the most select society are shown? Why did it not occur to you, Florentina, to institute a raffle or a bull-fight? We could have sold all the tickets among our friends, thus getting together a large sum, which you might have sent to

the orphan asylums. We were talking about this, last night, —Señora Sofía and I. Learn from that lady. The poor owe to her I know not how many things. She told me that they raised a great sum of money at the masquerade this winter. It is true they had to use a large part of the sum to pay for gas, the rent of the theatre, and to the employés; but it furnished the poor their piece of bread. Read the statistics, daughter, read the statistics."

Florentina laughed, and not finding a better answer, repeated Golfin's phrase, —

"Each one has his own way of spending pin-money."

"Señor Don Teodoro," said Don Manuel, discontentedly, "you agree with me, do you not, that my daughter is unlike others?"

"Yes, it is true," said Teodoro, meaningly, "there is no other like Florentina."

"Still, with all her faults," said the father, caressing her, "I love her more than my life. This rogue is worth more than her weight in gold. Let us see, which do you like better, Aldeacorba or Santa Irene?"

"I do not dislike Aldeacorba," said Florentina.

"Ah, you rogue, I see the road you are taking. Well, it pleases me. Do you know that my brother is now delivering a sermon to his son? Family matters. Something good must come of it. Look at my daughter, Don Teodoro; she has all the roses of May in her face. I am going to see what my brother says — what my brother says."

The worthy man withdrew. Teodoro approached Nela to look at her again.

"Did she sleep last night?" he asked Florentina.

"A little. All night I heard her sighing and moaning. To-night she will have a good bed, which I have ordered from Villamojada. I shall put it in this little room next to mine."

"Poor Nela! You cannot imagine," said the doctor, "the interest which I feel in this poor unhappy creature. People may laugh at this; but we are not made of stone. What we do to raise this poor being and to better her condition may be understood as done in behalf of a portion, by no means small, of the human race. There are thousands of beings like Nela in the world.

Who knows them? Where are they? They are lost in the social deserts. We frequently pass by them and do not see them. We give alms to them without knowing who they are. We cannot fix our minds on that miserable portion of society. At first I believed that Nela's was an exceptional case; but no, I have been thinking; I have recalled what I have seen, and I realize that it is one of the most common cases. This is an example of the state to which those beings come who were morally organized for good, for knowledge, for virtue, but who through neglect and abandonment are unable to develop the capacities of their souls. There are people who, having sight, are nevertheless spiritually blind."

Florentina, deeply impressed, seemed to understand and appreciate what Golfin said.

"Here is this girl," he added; "she possesses imagination, a keen sensibility; she knows how to love with tenderness and passion. Her soul has a marvellous aptitude for the truth, but at the same time it is full of gross superstitions; her religious ideas are vague, monstrous, mistaken; her moral ideas have no other guide than natural feel-

ing. She has had no other education than that which she has given herself, as a plant is nourished by its own fallen leaves. She owes nothing to others. During her childhood she has received no instruction, no kind advice, no holy exhortation. She has guided herself by crude examples, which she has applied to herself, according to her whim. As she has imagination and sensibility, as her soul has been inclined from the first to adore something, she has adored nature, as have also the primitive races. If you do not understand me, dear Florentina, I will explain better on another occasion.

"Her spirit gives to form, to beauty, a systematic preference. All her being, all her affections, circle about this idea. The lofty gifts of the spirit are, for her, a land scarcely discovered, and of which she has heard nothing but vague rumors. But she is so constituted that she will make rapid progress, and will soon be on a level with us. She is very ignorant, sees little; but, having the light, she will walk in it, — that light which nobody has given her before, because Pablo, through his ignorance of visible reality, has un-

wittingly added to her errors. The extravagant idealist is not the best teacher for a spirit of this class. We will teach this poor creature the truth; we will substitute a Christian conscience for her crude superstitions; we will make a new being of her. If you do not fully understand me, dear Florentina, I will explain more clearly by-and-by."

Florentina, in spite of not being a blue-stocking, thought she understood what Golfin had said in his original way. She was about to reply, but at that instant Nela wakened. Her eyes turned affrightedly, observing all in the room; then they were fixed alternately on the two persons who were contemplating her.

"Are you afraid of us?" Florentina said gently.

"No, señorita, I have no fear," stammered Nela. "You are very good. Don Teodoro also."

"Are you not content here? What are you afraid of?"

Golfin took her hand.

"Speak frankly to us," he said; "which of the two do you love the more, Florentina or me?"

Nela did not answer. Florentina and Golfin smiled; but she kept her serene taciturnity.

"Listen to one thing, foolish child," the doctor continued. "You must live with one of us. Florentina will stay here; I shall go away. Decide for one of the two. Which do you choose?"

Nela looked from one face to the other, without giving a direct answer. At length her gaze rested on Golfin's face.

"I fancy that I am preferred. It is an injustice, Nela. Florentina will be offended."

The poor invalid smiled then, and extending one of her weak hands toward Florentina, murmured:

"I do not wish you to be offended."

As she said this, Nela became livid; she stretched up her neck and her eyes protruded. She heard a terrible sound. She heard footsteps.

"He is coming," said Golfin, participating in the poor girl's terror.

"It is he," said Florentina, leaving the sofa, and running toward the door.

It was he. Pablo had pushed open the door and entered, walking slowly in a straight line, through habit acquired during his long blindness. He came smiling, his eyes free from the bandage

which he himself had lifted, looking straight before him. Not having familiarized himself with the rotary movements of the eye, he scarcely perceived what was on either side. One might say of him, as of many who have never been blind, that he saw only what was directly before him.

"Little cousin," he said, advancing toward her, "why have you not come to see me to-day? I am come to seek you. Your papa tells me you are making dresses for the poor. For that reason I pardon you."

Florentina knew not what to answer. Pablo had seen neither the doctor nor Nela. Florentina, in order to get him away from the sofa, had turned toward the balcony, and picking up some pieces of cloth, had seated herself in an attitude for work. She was bathed in sunlight, which enhanced her brilliant coloring and gave the most enchanting glow to her red-brown skin.

"Cousin," she said, lightly frowning, "Don Teodoro has not given you permission to remove the bandage to-day. This is not right."

"He will give me the permission afterward,"

said Pablo, smiling. "Nothing can harm me. I am well; but if anything should happen to me, it is no matter. No, it would not matter to become blind again after seeing you."

"How fine that would be!" said Florentina, in a tone of reproof.

"I was in my room alone. My father had gone out after talking to me. You already know what he was saying to me."

"No, I know nothing of it," replied the girl, fixing her eyes on her sewing.

"Well, I know it. My father is very wise. He loves us two dearly. When my father went out, I lifted the bandage and looked at the fields. I saw the rainbow, and I was mute with admiration. I do not know why I thought of you on looking at the perfect union of its colors. It produced in me a sensation like that which I felt when I first saw you, Florentina dearest. My heart could not contain itself in my breast. I cried a long time, and the tears blinded my eyes. I called you; but you did not answer. When I could see again, the rainbow had disappeared. I went out to look for you. I thought you were

in the orchard. I searched for you, and here I am. I find you so marvellously beautiful that it seems to me I have never fairly seen you before to-day. Now that I have had time to compare, I find all other women horrible beside you. They have told me that there is no other creature to be compared to you. I did not wish to believe it; but now I believe it as I believe in the light."

Saying this, he dropped on his knee beside Florentina, who, blushing and alarmed, bent more closely over her work.

"Cousin!" exclaimed Pablo, with enthusiasm, "why are you so beautiful? My father is very wise. One can oppose nothing to his logic nor to his kindness. Florentina, I believed that I could not love you. I thought it possible to love another more than you. What folly! Thank God! there is logic in my affections! My father, to whom I confessed my mistakes, says that I was loving a monster. Now I can say that I adore an angel. The stupid blind man has seen, and at last pays homage to true beauty. Do you not see me tremble? I look at you and desire nothing more than to seize you and lock you in my heart. Each

day I discover a new world. I discovered that of light; to-day I discover another. Is it possible that you, so beautiful, so divine, may be for me? Cousin, cousin mine, *esposa de mi alma!*"

Florentina made a motion to rise. Pablo seized her hand; pushing back the loose sleeve that covered it, he kissed her arm with vehement ardor.

"Stop! stop!" said Florentina, rising, and so compelling her cousin to rise with her. "Doctor, will you scold him?"

"Quick! The bandage on your eyes, and to your room, young man!" said Teodoro.

Confused, the youth turned his face to that side. He saw the doctor, and then the sofa covered with blankets.

"Are you there, Señor Golfin?" he said, approaching in a straight line.

"Yes, I am here," said Golfin, gravely. "I think you should put on the bandage and go to your room. I will go with you."

"I feel perfectly well; nevertheless, I will obey. But first let me see this."

He saw between the blankets a cadaverous face

of a most repulsive aspect. It seemed as though Nela's nose had become more peaked, her eyes more sunken, her skin more freckled, her hair thinner, her face narrower. With her eyes closed, her breathing painful, and her livid lips half open, the unhappy girl seemed in the last agonies of death.

"Ah," said Pablo, "my uncle told me that Florentina was caring for a poor girl. What wonderful kindness! Poor unfortunate, rejoice that you have fallen into the hands of an angel! My cousin is the most beautiful image of God. Are you ill? In my house you shall lack nothing. This poor little one is very ill, is she not, Doctor?"

"Yes," said the doctor; "and it will be best for her to be alone and not to hear talking."

"Then I will go."

Pablo stretched out his hand to touch that head which appeared to him the saddest expression of human misery and unhappiness. Then Nela opened her eyes and fixed them on his hand. Such was the sadness and woe in that glance that Pablo felt as though he had been looked at from

the depths of a grave. Nela drew her weak, rough hand from beneath the blankets, and took the hand of the Señorito de Penáguilas, who, on feeling its contact, trembled from head to foot, and uttered a cry in which all his soul found vent. There was a painful pause, — one of those pauses which precede the tragedies of the spirit, as if to make them more solemn.

With the trembling voice which strong emotion always produces, Nela said, —

"Yes, *señorito mio*, I am Nela."

Slowly, and as if moving a heavy object, she lifted Pablo's hand to her dry lips and gave it a kiss, then another; but on attempting a third caress her lips slipped weakly upon the youth's hand. All were hushed. All were looking at her. Pablo was the first to break the silence.

"You are! You are!"

Then many things occurred to him, but he could say nothing. It would have been necessary for him to discover a new language, as he had discovered two new worlds, — that of light, and that of love through the human form. He did nothing but gaze and gaze, and recall that shadowy world in

which he had lived, where he had lost in the mist the passions, the ideas, and the errors of blindness.

Florentina drew near, drying her tears, to examine Nela's face. Golfin, who was looking at her, pronounced these lugubrious words, —

"He has killed her. Cursed be his sight!"

Then turning to Pablo, he said sternly, "Go!"

"To die — to die without any cause — that cannot be!" said Florentina, with anguish in her tone, putting her hand on Nela's forehead. "María, Marianela!"

She called her repeatedly, leaning over her and looking at her, as one looks and calls from the edge of a well to a person who is submerged in its deep and dark waters.

"She does not answer," said Pablo, in terror.

Golfin watched that life so near its extinction, and noted that the pulse still fluttered under his touch. Pablo leaned over her, and putting his lips to the dying one's ear cried, "Nela! Nela! Dear friend!"

At that she stirred, opened her eyes, and moved her hands. It seemed as if she had returned from a great distance. On seeing that Pablo's glance

was fixed on her with observing curiosity she made a movement of shame and terror, as though wishing to hide her face, just as one tries to hide a crime.

"What ails her?" exclaimed Florentina. "Don Teodoro, you are not a man if you do not save her. If you do not save her you are a charlatan!"

"Nela," repeated Pablo, overcome by grief, and not yet recovered from the astonishment which the sight of his little guide had caused him, "you seem afraid of me. What have I done to you?"

The sick girl stretched out her hand, and taking Florentina's, laid it on her breast, and then took Pablo's and laid it also on her breast. She pressed them there, and her sunken eyes looked at them, but her glance seemed far away. Her breathing suddenly became very labored, and she sighed several times.

Teodoro put all the household in motion. He called and cried; made them bring remedies, powerful restoratives, and tried to stay the rapid ebbing of life. He commanded everybody to leave the room. Only Florentina remained.

Ah, those potent restoratives, those nerve-excitants, stinging the swooning body to renew its life, — they made the muscles of the unhappy invalid twitch; but in spite of this, she failed more each instant.

"It is a cruelty," said Teodoro, throwing down the mustard and the irritants. "It is a cruelty that we are doing. We set dogs at the dying, that the pain of the bites may make them live a little longer. Out with it all!"

"Is there no remedy?"

"That which God sends."

"What disease is this?"

"Death!" exclaimed Golfin, with an excitement ill-suited to a doctor.

"But what disease has brought death to her?"

"Death."

"I do not express myself well. I mean of what — "

"Of death. I do not know whether to think she has died of shame, of jealousy, of despair, of sorrow, or of crossed love. Singular pathology! We know nothing! We know only trivial things!"

"Oh, what doctors!"

"We know nothing. We know a little of the surface."

"What is this?"

"It seems acute meningitis."

"And what is that?"

"Anything whatever — death."

"Is it possible for a person to die without any known cause, almost without illness? Señor Golfin, what is this?"

"How can I know?"

"Are you not a doctor?"

"Of the eyes, yes; but not of the passions."

"Of the passions!" she exclaimed, addressing the dying girl. "And you, poor unhappy one, what passions killed you?"

"Ask that of your future husband."

Florentina was astounded, stupefied.

"Unhappy child," she exclaimed with a smothered sob, "can mental pain kill in this way?"

"When I picked her up in La Trascava, she was already consumed by a frightful fever."

"But that is not sufficient."

"You say it is not sufficient. God and nature say it is."

"It seems as though she had received a stab."

"Remember what those eyes, which are soon to be closed forever, saw a little while ago. Consider that a blind man was loving her, and that that man is no longer blind, and has seen her, — has seen her, has seen her! It is like a murder!"

"Oh, what a horrible mystery!"

"No; it is no mystery," cried Teodoro, with something like terror. "It is the dreadful dispelling of illusions; it is the harsh stroke of reality, of the implacable reality that has at length interposed between these two noble beings. I have brought this reality, I!"

"Oh, what a mystery!" repeated Florentina, who did not understand, for she was still confused.

"Mystery? No, no!" said Teodoro, more agitated each moment. "It is the pure reality, the sudden disappearance of a world of illusions. The reality has been for him a new life; for her, it has been pain, suffocation; it has been humiliation, sadness, rebuffs, grief, jealousy, death."

"And all through — "

"All through the eyes which were opened to

the light, to the reality. I cannot put this word out of my mind; it seems written on my brain in letters of fire."

"All through those opened eyes? But can grief kill so soon, almost without time to try a remedy?"

"I do not know," said Teodoro, confused, disturbed, terrified, contemplating that human book of obscure characters, in which scientific vision cannot decipher the mysterious symbols of life and of death.

"You do not know!" exclaimed Florentina, despairingly. "Then why are you a doctor?"

"I do not know! I do not know! I do not know!" exclaimed Teodoro, striking his head with his hand. "Yes, one thing I do know, and that is, that we know no more than superficial phenomena. Señorita, I am a mechanic for the eyes, nothing more."

Then he looked with closest attention on her who trembled between life and death, and with an accent of bitterness exclaimed, —

"Soul, what passes within you?"

Florentina began to cry.

"The soul," she murmured, dropping her head upon her breast, "has already flown."

"No," said Teodoro, touching Nela, "there is yet something here; but it is so little that her soul seems to have disappeared, and only her sighs to have remained."

"*Dios mio!*" exclaimed Florentina, beginning a prayer.

"Ah, unhappy spirit!" murmured Golfin, "it is evident that you were very poorly lodged."

The two bent to observe her more closely.

"Her lips move," cried Florentina.

"She speaks!"

Yes, Nela's lips moved. She had articulated one, two, three words.

"What has she said?"

"What has she said?"

Neither of the two could understand it. It was beyond doubt the language which is understood by those who live the infinite life.

After this, her lips moved no more. They were half-open, and the row of little white teeth was visible. Teodoro stooped, and kissing Nela's forehead, said, —

"Woman, thou hast done well in leaving this world!"

Florentina began to cry, murmuring with a tremulous voice, —

"I wished to make her happy, and she did not wish it."

XXII.

ADIOS.

STRANGE, unheard-of thing! Nela, who had never had a bed, nor clothes, nor shoes, nor food, nor consideration, nor family, nor anything of her own, not even a name, had a magnificent tomb which caused no little envy among the inhabitants of Socartes. This posthumous magnificence was the greatest irony ever seen in that country. Florentina, with her generous feelings, wished to lighten the pain of not having been able to succor Nela in life with the satisfaction of honoring her poor body in death. She was criticised for doing this; but we see in such an unconventional deed one more proof of the delicacy of her soul.

When they buried Nela, the curious who went to see her — this it is which is strange and unheard

of — found her almost beautiful; at least they said so. It was the only time she had ever received admiration.

The funeral was celebrated with pomp, and the priests of Villamojada were open-mouthed with astonishment, to see money given for the saying of Masses for the daughter of La Canela. It was wonderful, phenomenal, that a being whose social importance had been like that of the insects should be the cause of burning many candles, of so much hanging of drapery, and of making chanters and sacristans hoarse. Nothing else was spoken of for six months.

The surprise — and it may be said at once, — the indignation, of those good people reached its climax, when they saw two wagons come loaded with enormous pieces of fine white stone. Ah! In Señora Centeno's mind there was a frightful confusion of ideas, a veritable intellectual cataclysm, a chaos, as she considered that those fine white stones were for Nela's sepulchre. If an ox had flown up before her eyes, or her husband had begun to argue, it would not have surprised her now.

The parochial records of Villamojada were searched, because it was necessary that she who in life had no fixed name — as is proved by this story, wherein she is called by many differing names — should have one after death. That indispensable item for the archives of death having been found, the magnificent monument which rears itself proudly among the rustic crosses of the cemetery of Aldeacorba had these lines engraved on it: —

R. I. P.

MARÍA MANUELA TELLEZ

Reclamóla el cielo

12 de Octubre de 186–

A garland of flowers, beautifully sculptured, crowned the inscription. Some months later, when Florentina and Pablo had already been married, and when (the truth is told because the truth is all important) nobody in Aldeacorba de Suso any longer remembered Nela, there came travelling through that country some strangers of the class called "tourists;" and as soon as they saw the

superb tomb of marble erected in the cemetery by the religious pity and the sublime affection of one exemplary woman, they stood gaping in admiration, and, without further investigation, wrote in their note-books the following observations, which, under the title of "Sketches from Cantabria," were published in an English paper: —

"The most surprising thing in Aldeacorba is the splendid monument erected in the cemetery, over the tomb of an illustrious maiden, celebrated in that country for her beauty. Doña Mariquita Manuela Tellez belonged to one of the noblest and wealthiest families of Cantabria, the family of Tellez Girón and of Trastamara. Of a spiritual, poetic, and somewhat capricious nature, she indulged her fancy for wandering through the streets, playing the guitar, and singing Calderón's odes, and dressed herself in rags in order to mingle with the crowd of mendicants, pickpockets, minstrels, toreadors, friars, hidalgos, gypsies, and muleteers, who, in the kirmess, form that motley Spanish people which continues — and always will continue — independent and picturesque, in spite of the railroads and periodicals which are being introduced into the western Peninsula. The abbé of Villamojada cried, when speaking to us of the caprices, the virtue, the beauty of the aristocratic daughter of nobility, who was wont to conduct herself with the most high-bred dignity in the balls, feasts, and *cañas* of Madrid.

The number of beautiful romances, sonnets, and madrigals composed in honor of this gentle maiden by the Spanish poets is incalculable."

It was sufficient for me to read this to comprehend that the worthy tourists had seen visions. I resolved to discover the truth, and this book is the result of my investigations.

THE END.

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